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LIFE AND GENIUS OF ARIOSTO

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TORONTO

LIFE AND GENIUS

OF

ARIOSTO

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PREFACE

THE present volume was originally intended to accompany my adaptations of *Tales from Ariosto*, and the primary object in view was to do something to revive the interest of the ordinary English reader in the *Orlando Furioso* and its author.

It was remarked recently by a writer in *The Times*, *à propos* of the centenary of *Waverley*, that a book might rank as a classic if it had retained popular favour a hundred years. The *Orlando Furioso* has stood this test for four times that period. Although from about the middle of the nineteenth century Ariosto has fallen into comparative neglect in English-speaking countries, in Italy, on the other hand, there has been in the same period a great accession to Ariostean literature. Critical editions have been published of Ariosto's text, and every fact bearing on his life and work has been examined with the greatest care. Among the most prominent of these latter-day critics was Carducci, who wrote a fascinating study of the youth of Ariosto, and an enthusiastic

essay on the *Orlando Furioso*, and also supervised an edition of that work. There can be no question that both as a writer and as a man Ariosto has come out all the stronger after the exposure to the fierce light of modern criticism.

The comparative neglect of Ariosto in this country in recent years is due in the first place to the continued falling off in reading Italian. It is probable that the general knowledge of Italian by English people is less now than at any period from the time of Chaucer onwards.

This neglect of Italian has perhaps been more prejudicial to Ariosto than to any other of the great Italian writers, because though he is the most simple to read in the original he seems to be the most difficult to translate into English. Ariosto ought to be read not with a furrowed brow and an intense gaze, but with an easy mind and a careless eye. Unfortunately there is no translation available for the English reader which bears this test. Sir John Harrington no doubt did his work in the right spirit, and his loose paraphrase shows Elizabethan vigour. But in spite of reprints his book was very rare even in the eighteenth century. William Huggins (1757) had not heard of it until his own translation was well advanced, and then he had great difficulty in seeing a copy; and when he did see one he reviled it. Huggins attempted the impossible task of a

verbatim translation in the original octave stanza, but as the Italian is printed in parallel columns the work might be useful as a key. It is, however, very scarce. John Hoole (1783) reviled Huggins and tried his hand in Popish couplets. He certainly avoided the dangers of literal accuracy, and in spite of its leaden feet his version ran into a goodly number of editions. But his inaccuracies aroused the wrath of William Stewart Rose, who reviled him even as Huggins had reviled the good Elizabethan. Rose achieved a success of esteem even before his volumes were published, being encouraged to complete the work (1831) by his friend Sir Walter Scott. Rose was an accomplished Italian scholar, but unluckily like Huggins he tried a literal translation in the original stanza, and unlike Huggins did not print the Italian side by side. Rose effectually displaced Hoole, but his own version was so cramped and severe that it also displaced Ariosto, so far as any ordinary reader was concerned.

It is strange that with all the enthusiasm displayed for Latin and Latin culture so few Englishmen read Italian. Any one who will take the trouble to learn enough Italian to read Ariosto will certainly obtain his reward not only directly, but indirectly, through the central position occupied by Ariosto in Italian literature.

In recent years it is true that there has been in

this country a revival of interest in Dante, but unfortunately the Dantesque standard has been applied to other writers and they have been found wanting. In the same way for a time Mozart was decried because he was not so severe as Wagner, but Mozart has come into his own again and Ariosto is the Mozart of the weavers of romance.

The failure to read Ariosto in the original has led the English reader to rely on short summaries of his work and its qualities, supplemented by comparison with other poets. But Ariosto is too many-sided for treatment by such short methods. Very early it became the fashion to search for allegories in Ariosto. But the allegories are the inventions not of Ariosto but of his commentators. Ariosto is not an allegorist but a story-teller. He is much nearer akin to Chaucer than to Spenser, who indeed borrowed largely from Ariosto but not allegories. Some of the stories in Ariosto recall those of the *Arabian Nights*, though it may be noted that the latter were not translated into a Western language for two centuries after the publication of the *Orlando Furioso*.

In the former volume of *Tales* I tried to retell some of Ariosto's chief stories in such a way as to bring out the main plot and to get rid of some of the popular misunderstandings about his work.

In the present volume the idea is to deal with the man and the period in which he lived and again

to get rid of some popular misconceptions that still prevail in spite of the illuminating work of Mr. Gardner. Ariosto was the representative writer of the Italian Renaissance, and by a strange perversion Renaissance has come to be translated decadence. Decadent popes, decadent poets, decadent Ariosto, is the sequence with this interpretation. But Renaissance does not mean decadence, and certainly there was no decadence in Ariosto or in his work. "A man of supreme genius, and at the same time an essentially good and lovable character : he was goodness itself (such was the saying of a contemporary). To adapt to him a phrase that has somewhere been used of Shakespeare—he keeps the broad sunlit highway of Renaissance life." [1]

The present study has been made as short as possible consistently with the object in view. The reader who wishes for a full and authoritative history of the man and his surroundings has ready to his hand the excellent works of Mr. Edmund G. Gardner, *Dukes and Poets in Ferrara* (1904), and the *King of Court Poets*, *Ariosto* (1906). For the historical parts of the following pages I am under very great obligations to Mr. Gardner. At the same time the opinions on Ariosto as a man and on his genius here given have been formed by independent study. I have no doubt been influenced by the

[1] Gardner's *Ariosto*, p. 262.

learning of Panizzi and Pio Rajna, and most of all by the enthusiasm of Carducci, but the judgment such as it is on the man and his genius is founded on the impressions made by reading and re-reading Ariosto's own works. A short bibliography is appended, and the references in the book are to the editions there named. A few passages from Chapter V. of the present work were used in the introduction to the volume of *Tales*.

J. S. N.

ANNOTATED BIBLIOGRAPHY.

[In the following *Bibliography* I have only inserted books which I have found useful in writing the present short *Life*. Baruffaldi in an appendix to his *Life of Ariosto* gives a catalogue of the principal editions of the *Furioso* down to the year 1788. There are cited one hundred and thirty of these principal editions in Italian published in different countries, or roughly one in every two years since the death of Ariosto. Many of these editions have elaborate commentaries. There have been many important editions since Baruffaldi published his catalogue, and every aspect of Ariosto's life and work has been subjected to minute investigation and criticism, especially under the stimulus of the celebrations (1875) in honour of the fourth centenary of his birth. The extent of the Ariostean literature is only alluded to here as indicating the popularity of his work in the original Italian in different periods in different countries.]

WORKS OF ARIOSTO

PANIZZI, ANTONIO. *Orlando Innamorato di Boiardo*: *Orlando Furioso di Ariosto*; with an *Essay on the Romantic Narrative Poetry of the Italians*; *Memoirs and Notes*, 9 vols., London, 1830–34. Italian texts (revised); Essay, Memoirs, etc., in English. The Essay shows the wide extent of Italian romantic poetry, and traces the development, and throws much light on the history and meaning of chivalry. The Memoirs and notes are of special interest in showing the close connection between Boiardo and Ariosto. The

comparative references to other literatures (*e.g.* English, Scottish, Spanish, French, German) are of great interest and full of curious details. The influence of Latin is noticed throughout.

PAPINI, PIETRO. *Orlando Furioso di Lodovico Ariosto secondo l' edizione del 1532 con commento* (Edizione integra), Florence, 1903, 1 vol. pp. xxiii, 703. The notes give in a very convenient form the results of previous commentators, critics, etc., and explain any difficulties of interpretation. There is an abridgement for the use of schools, 1 vol. pp. xiii, 465. "La riduzione è stata fatta in modo da contentare qualunque più difficile maestro e qualunque più saggia madre di famiglia."

CAPPELLI, ANTONIO. *Lettere di Lodovico Ariosto con prefazione storico-critica documenti e note*, 3rd edition, Milan, 1887, pp. clxxxiv, 360. The standard edition of the *Letters of Ariosto* with relative documents. The introduction shows independent thought.

TAMBARA, GIOVANNI. *Le Satire di Ludovico Ariosto con introduzione, fac-simile e note*, Leghorn, 1903. The standard edition of the *Satires* with critical introduction on the text. The writer shows that the MS. in the Ferrara Library, long supposed to be in the handwriting of Ariosto, is only a copy.

ARIOSTO, LODOVICO. *Rime e Satire con Annotazioni*, 1 vol. pp. 512, Florence, Molini, 1822. In the edition reprinted in 1824 the *Satires* were revised according to the MS. in Ferrara. The *Rime* include the *Cinque Canti*, *Sonetti*, *Madragali*, *Canzoni*, *Capitoli*, *Stanze*, and the *Egloga* (see below, p. 48 n.).

TORTOLI, GIOVANNI. *Commedie e Satire di Lodovico Ariosto annotate*, pp. lxv, 616, Florence, 1856. Both forms of the Comedies are given (prose and verse), and the notes are useful.

Orlando Furioso, nella Stamperia di Stefano Orlandino, Venice, 1730. This sumptuous folio is a thesaurus of Ariostean literature up to the time, and gives a good idea of the importance attached to the *Orlando Furioso* two centuries after Ariosto's death.

Orlando Furioso, Birmingham, Baskerville, 4 vols. royal octavo, 1773. Portrait by Eisen and 46 plates by Cipriani, Cochin, Eisen, Greuze, Monnet, and Moreau. A quarto edition of 100 copies was printed at the same time.

Orlando Furioso, Paris, P. Plassan, 1795, 4 vols. royal octavo. This edition, besides the plates of the Baskerville edition, has 48 new

plates by Cochin and Moreau. There is prefixed the *Vita di Lodovico Ariosto*, by G. A. Barotti, with his valuable notes, pp. lxxi.

TRANSLATIONS

HARRINGTON, SIR JOHN. His translation (1 vol. quarto) of the *Orlando Furioso* was first published in 1591, and dedicated to Queen Elizabeth, his god-mother. A revised edition in 1634. The book has some very curious plates which are supposed to give a *résumé* of the story in each canto. To each canto are also appended notes giving "the Morall, the Historie, and the Allegory." There is a "briefe apologie of Poetrie" by way of introduction, and at the end "a generall allegory of the whole," and a Life of Ariosto. The book is very scarce.

HUGGINS, WILLIAM. London, 1757, 2 vols. quarto. A literal translation of the *Orlando Furioso* in the octave stanza, with the Italian in parallel columns. This work is also very rare, and except as a convenient key to the Italian is of no interest. The translation is in general accurate, but cramped and forced, and the rhymes are often distracting. Here is a specimen:

> Orland who long time of Angelica
> Had been enamoured with her beauty rare,
> And had in Tart'ry, Media, India,
> Many immortal trophies left for her,
> Into the West with her retook his way
> Under the Pyrenean mountains where
> With France's force and that of Allemain
> King Charles had pitched his tents for his campaign.
>
> *Orl. Fur.* Canto I. st. 5.

HOOLE, JOHN. *Orlando Furioso*, translated with very full notes, and some plates by Angelica Kauffman and others, 5 vols., London, 1773–83. Hoole is very inaccurate, and often omits or changes difficult passages. Scott called him "the noble transmuter of the gold of Ariosto into lead." To the present-day reader Hoole's heroic verse is, to say the least, trying, but the stories of Ariosto keep some of their vitality. Hoole also translated *Tasso*. The contrast with Ariosto under the same process is instructive. Hoole's *Ariosto* is said to have run through seventeen editions. Hoole records with great satisfaction that the good wishes of Dr. Samuel Johnson had always gone along with the translator. Here is a

specimen of Hoole's verse and inaccuracy. In Canto X. st. 110 Ariosto describes the effect on the orc (sea-monster) when the enchanted shield was blazed in its eyes. Ariosto says the orc was seen horribly upturned in the foam of the sea like a trout (poisoned) in a stream limed by some mountaineer. Hoole is as follows :

> Full on th' astonished orc the splendour plays ;
> His senses vanish with the dazzling blaze.
> As when the skies with sultry vapours glow,
> The panting fishes faint and sink below ;
> So midst the billows of the deep is shown
> The hideous monster horribly o'erthrown.

[BOYD, HENRY. London, 1784, 2 vols. I have not seen this translation which is mentioned by Baruffaldi.]

ROSE, WILLIAM STEWART. The translation by Rose of the *Orlando Furioso* with notes, etc., was first published in 8 volumes, London, 1831. Rose also made an abstract of Berni's version of Boiardo. As a translation the work of Rose is no doubt the best, and he is often quoted by Panizzi with approbation. The translation, however, is so stiff and cramped that it is difficult to read. Cf. Lockhart's *Life of Scott*, vol. v. p. 46.

JOHNSON, CHRISTOPHER. A doctor in practice in Lancaster translated into prose the first 12 cantos, but was prevented from finishing the work by the favourable reception accorded to Rose's first volume (1823). Dr. Johnson published his 12 cantos in 1827. By the kindness of his grand-daughter[1] I have been allowed to read a copy, of which only a limited number were printed for private circulation. The translation is in good straightforward English and accurate, and there are some interesting notes. He corrects Rose on several points.

SPANISH TRANSLATION. The translation into Spanish by Don Ieronymo de Urrea is of special interest as being quoted in *Don Quixote*. It was first published in Antwerp in 1549, and there were a dozen reprints in different places before 1583, including an edition at Venice 1575, in which there are curious woodcuts, one to the beginning of each canto.

[1] Miss Alice Johnson presented me with several of the Ariostean works used by her grandfather, including Huggins, the first Spanish and French translations, the folio of 1730, and other rare books, a most pleasing acknowledgment of my efforts to revive interest in Ariosto.

ANNOTATED BIBLIOGRAPHY

FRENCH TRANSLATIONS. In French also there were about a dozen different translations before 1583. The most famous is the first by Jehan des Gouttes : Lyons, 1543. See below, p. 121, n. 1, for full title. This translation was in prose. Very many other French translations had appeared before 1746 (*see* Baruffaldi).

GERMAN TRANSLATION. Johann Diederich Gries (1775-1842) translated into German both Ariosto's *Furioso* and Boiardo's *Innamorato*. The translations are in the original stanza, but, unlike the corresponding efforts in English of Huggins and Rose, are eminently readable as well as literal. His translations have been justly described as "classical and unparalleled," and were much admired by Goethe, a personal friend. They are published in a cheap form in the Gotta'sche Bibliothek der Weltliteratur.

GENERAL WORKS

GARDNER, EDMUND G. *Dukes and Poets in Ferrara*, London, 1904, pp. xv, 578. With illustrations, a full bibliography, a selection of unpublished documents, and genealogical tables of the House of Este and others. A most elaborate, interesting, and authoritative study of Ferrara in the century of Boiardo and Ariosto.

The King of Court Poets, Ariosto. London, 1906, pp. xv, 395. Also with illustrations, full bibliography, and genealogical tables of the Ariosti and others. This work is a continuation of the former with special reference to Ariosto. The full value of these studies can only be realised by comparing them with English books of the later nineteenth century dealing with Ariosto.

CARDUCCI, GIOSUE. *La Gioventù di Ludovico Ariosto e la Poesia Latina in Ferrara. Su l' Orlando Furioso.* Bologna, 1905, vol. xv. of the collected edition. The essay on the youth of Ariosto was first published in connection with the celebrations in Ferrara (1875) of the fourth centenary of Ariosto's birth. It shows great learning and research on the early life of Ariosto, and in the presentation of the main theme that the classical revival was necessary to the development of the genius of Ariosto. The graphic portraits of Ariosto and his contemporaries show how easily Carducci carries his learning. The essay on the *Orlando Furioso* is a brilliant study on the place of Ariosto in the world's literature. Both works show the greatest enthusiasm for the personality and the genius of Ariosto.

Cavalleria e umanesimo, Bologna, 1909, being vol. 20 of the collected works of Carducci. The first part of this volume deals with the Italian romances of chivalry and their singers from the tenth century to the fourteenth. The second part is an essay on the Tuscan poetry of Polizian, the learned companion of Lorenzo the Magnificent. The development of the romance of chivalry culminating in Ariosto is not only valuable as a critical study but as showing the vitality of the legends of chivalry (*e.g.* the legend of the Almeramici).

RAJNA, PIO. *Le fonti dell' Orlando Furioso.* Second edition, enlarged and revised, Florence, 1900, pp. xiv, 629. The writer explains in the Preface that this work on the sources of the *Furioso* was originally suggested by Carducci in connection with the Ariostean fourth centenary celebrations in Ferrara in 1875, but the magnitude of the task delayed the first publication till the year after. As early as 1540, only eight years after the publication of the *Furioso* in its final form, a special work was written on the sources of Boiardo and Ariosto. Many similar works followed down to the nineteenth century—specially noteworthy being that of Panizzi. Rajna has utilised all this learning and added much original matter. In the introduction Rajna shows in general the relations of Ariosto to his predecessors in the romances of chivalry of which the different kinds are fully described. The rest of the work gives in detail sources (or analogies) of the various characters and incidents. To any one familiar with the original this detailed study of the *Orlando Furioso* is full of interest, and also serves to show the central position of Ariosto in the development of imaginative literature.

CAMPORI, GIUSEPPE. *Notizie per la vita di Lodovico Ariosto*, Florence, 1896. "This work on its first appearance was justly considered the best essay on the accurate treatment of certain events in the life of the poet." Campori specially praises the just and effective administration of Ariosto when Governor of Garfagnana, and observes that he there showed qualities of mind not suspected by those only familiar with his poetry. He thinks also that the three years' exile from the Court at Ferrara strengthened his character. Campori (like Carducci) is an enthusiast not only for the poet but for the man.

BARUFFALDI, GIROLAMO. *La Vita di M. Lodovico Ariosto.* Ferrara, 1807. Quarto, pp. 323. This *Life* is "still the most complete and thorough yet written, though naturally not corresponding in all respects to the present state of scholarship" (Gardner). Unfor-

tunately it has not been translated. Panizzi, who was biased against everything Papal, considered the judgment of Baruffaldi in matters of religion warped, because he was an *abbé*, otherwise he constantly refers to Baruffaldi as an authority. The *Life* is very pleasant reading and full of interesting details. Baruffaldi was librarian and secretary of the Ariostean Academy of Ferrara, and had access to many unpublished documents.

SMITH, ADAM. *Of the Affinity between Certain English and Italian Verses.* Reprinted in the *Essays.* A. Murray, London, 1869. Adam Smith was not only an economist. He wrote, *inter alia*, an essay on Music, Dancing, and Poetry : "In the power of expressing a meaning with clearness and distinctness Dancing is superior to Music, and Poetry to Dancing." The main argument in the essay on English and Italian verses is to show that English heroic rhyme is principally of single rhymes, whilst in Italian the corresponding rhyme is in general double. The rarity of single rhymes in Italian gives them an odd appearance more suitable for burlesque. "Single rhymes occur very rarely in Ariosto ; but frequently in the burlesque poem of Ricciardetto." The catalogue of Adam Smith's library shows that he had two copies of Boiardo.

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CHAPTER I

THE HOUSE OF ESTE AND THE COURT OF FERRARA

THE appreciation of any great writer involves a preliminary appreciation of the age in which he lived and moved. But the influence of the age on the man ought not to be exaggerated. A rough measure of the real greatness of any writer is furnished by the success with which he transcends the peculiar spirit and influence of his own age and makes his appeal to the common thought and feelings of humanity. The age of Ariosto was the Renaissance in Italy. It has been well said that the zenith of Renaissance art falls between 1496 and 1512, and Ariosto was closely associated with some of the most famous artists of the time, *e.g.* Dosso Dossi and Raphael.[1] It was in 1512 that Ariosto wrote to the Marquis of Mantua

[1] Ariosto eulogises the principal artists of his time (*Orl. Fur.* Canto XXXIII. st. 2). The list includes Michael Angelo, *Michel, più che mortale, Angel divino*; Raphael; Titian; Leonardo; the two Dossi. "Of all the painters of the sixteenth century, Ariosto undoubtedly had most spiritual affinity with Titian and Dosso Dossi" (Gardner, *Ariosto*, p. 364). Raphael, however, painted the scene for his comedy *Supposes* when it was presented at Rome before the Pope. See below, p. 60.

about a book he had begun a long time ago[1]—"A large book that needs a great deal of work—written in such a fashion, with an infinite number of marginal notes and corrections that it would be impossible for any one but myself to read it." That is to say, the *Orlando Furioso* was being constructed during this zenith of Renaissance art; and alike by admirers and detractors Ariosto has been styled the representative writer of the Renaissance.

In the age of Ariosto, Italy was broken up into different states, all more or less under the influence of foreign invaders or so-called barbarians. Florence, Milan, Naples, Venice, and Rome were the great powers within Italy, that is to say, great, relatively to the smaller independent states. France, Spain, Germany, and Switzerland furnished the invaders, and for a time even the danger threatened by the Turks was serious. The many rulers of Italy were always engaged in diplomatic or actual strife in pursuit of their own interests; there was a kind of shifting balance of power, the shifting being effected partly by internal forces, partly by external pressure. The forms of government varied from absolute despotism to extreme democracy, but even in the democracies the strong man was always the real ruler for the time. The consequence was that personality and personal relations were always factors of the first importance. Under these conditions a union of Italy against foreign invasion was unthink-

[1] The letter is given in full by Cappelli, *op. cit.* p. 22. In confirmation of the difficulty of reading the MSS. Ariosto mentions that he himself had read some part to the Marchesana when she was in Ferrara.

able, though Ariosto, like every other great Italian poet, has his outbursts against the barbarians.

The active life of Ariosto was spent in the confidential service of his rulers, and on this service he was thrown in contact with many of the notables of his day, and was entrusted with important missions of great delicacy. To realise adequately the nature of this active life and the meaning of the various missions on which Ariosto was sent would demand such a study as has been given by Mr. Gardner, and for the present purpose would be out of proportion. What the missions were, what was the nature of the personal feuds and alliances, must be put aside. It is enough to know that the life of Ariosto was largely consumed in perilous journeys and in the manipulation of Court intrigues, in the interests of Ferrara.

The state of Ferrara at its best occupied a stretch of territory that reached from Venice almost across Northern Italy, and included several important cities, such as Modena and Reggio. In his celebrated poem to the city of Ferrara Carducci has introduced "the geological and psychological conformation of its province and population" as a setting to its development from mythical times. As the rivers have brought down tribute from the mountains to make the great and solid plain on which the city is built, so also the mountains and the hills of Italy have sent a tribute of human material and the fire and energy of creative genius.[1]

[1] *Rime e ritmi*, pp. 273, 319.

Ferrara exercised a double influence on Ariosto—direct and indirect. The direct influence shaped the business of his life, the indirect gave the form of expression to his poetical genius. It is very remarkable—perhaps there is no similar case in literary history—that in all essentials Boiardo, who was the father in poetry of Ariosto, came under the same influences. The *Orlando Furioso*[1] is in design and in substance a continuation of the unfinished poem of Boiardo, the *Orlando Innamorato*.[1] But for the work of Boiardo that of Ariosto must have been either entirely different or not written at all. In the letter to the Marquis of Mantua already quoted Ariosto definitely says that his poem is a continuation of that of Boiardo. In his learned edition of the two poets Panizzi has given in the notes numberless references to details of the imitations of Boiardo by Ariosto. Although Ariosto does not mention by name Boiardo or his poem except in this letter, he constantly refers to Boiardo as already well known to his readers (or hearers). Rajna[2] gives a good example. Ariosto is beginning a description of the wonders effected by the ring which makes the holder invisible, when he suddenly stops and asks, "Why should I tell you if you know as well as I do already?" That

[1] Rajna observes (p. 67) that the word *Furioso* was used by Ariosto in its original Latin sense (*furere* and its derivatives). It suggests rather madness than fury. Boiardo's poem was originally entitled *L'Innamoramento di Orlando* (see Panizzi, Bibliography of editions appended to vol. v.), but was changed to *Orlando innamorato*. The madness of Orlando is perhaps suggested in the final scenes in the siege of Albracca in Boiardo, but the originality of Ariosto is shown in making real madness the central idea of his work.

[2] Rajna, *Le Fonti dell' Orlando Furioso*, p. 42 *n.*

is of course from Boiardo. The debt of the later poet is not confined to plot or characters, but extends to details. If the similarity of the two poems is surprising, still more surprising is the difference in their fate as regards popular esteem. Until the latter half of the nineteenth century Ariosto's *Orlando Furioso* was probably the most popular poem in Europe; but when Panizzi published his critical edition of Boiardo's *Orlando Innamorato* in 1830, he stated that it had not been reprinted in its original form for three hundred years. "It was only known by name; it had never been well edited; it was a scarce book, and who would think of reading it after the *Furioso*?" In the meantime the *Furioso* had been reprinted numberless times and translated into the chief modern languages (and even into Latin); it had given rise to a literature of commentators, criticism, continuations, and imitations. Every detail in the life of its author was sought after with the greatest avidity. The popularity of Ariosto was enormous; he was "the most beloved poet in Europe." But though Boiardo was forgotten, Ariosto's debt remains greater to him than that of Virgil to Homer, and for a full appreciation of the literary value of Ariosto the reader must compare and contrast Boiardo.

Not only was there this very close literary connection between the two poets, but there was very great similarity in their lives and in the conditions under which they wrote. Both were of noble family, and both were closely connected with the Court of

Ferrara; both presented comedies and recited verses to the Court; and both were employed in highly confidential missions and in official posts of importance. To both, the dominating world was the world of Ferrara. The century exactly covered by the lives of the two poets (1434–1533)[1] was the most eventful and brilliant period in the history of the House of Este, the rulers of Ferrara.

The natural introduction to the life and work of Ariosto is to give some account of the rulers and the Court of Ferrara, with special reference to the influence on Ariosto directly, and indirectly on Ariosto through Boiardo.

Lodovico Ariosto was an aristocrat descended from a noble family of Bologna, and the house of the Ariosti was connected by blood with the most illustrious families of Italy.[2] As far back as the twelfth century his kinsmen were distinguished in the three noble professions—the Church, arms, and Government. Two of the Ariosti took part in the Crusade of 1217; and some of the finest stanzas of the *Furioso* show that three centuries later the poet himself was a crusader in heart and fired with the idea of driving the unclean Turk from Europe. He calls on the nations that professed and called themselves Christians to turn from rending and plundering Italy, to the recovery of Jerusalem and the expulsion of the Turks from the best parts of the

[1] Boiardo was born in 1434 at the castle of Scandiano, about seven miles from Reggio, and died in December 1494. Ariosto was born in Reggio, September 8, 1474, and died in Ferrara, June 6, 1533.

[2] Baruffaldi, p. 10.

world. Passionately he calls on Italy: "Fetid sink of every vice dost thou still sleep in drunkenness, and is it nothing to thee to be slave to this and that nation which of old served thee!" Passionately he calls on Pope Leo to be not only in name a lion, but to play the lion in defending and arousing Italy.[1]

The Ariosti were closely connected by ties of blood with the rulers of Ferrara. Early in the thirteenth century the eighth marquis of Ferrara and head of the House of Este, having found a temporary refuge in Bologna, made his mistress the beautiful Lippa Ariosto, who followed him back to Ferrara. On her deathbed she was made his lawful wife, and from her are descended all the Dukes of Ferrara. Another branch of the Ariosti also settled in Ferrara at a later date, and in brief the Ariosti were bound to the House of Este by kinship and by a succession of courtly offices. Lodovico the poet spent his life in their service; and naturally loyalty to the House of Este was a dominant strain in his character; and he was inclined to look with the eye of a Scottish Highlander on the misdeeds of his chiefs, and with a like indulgence to exaggerate their valour and magnificence.

Life in Ferrara in the century of Boiardo and Ariosto was highly complex, both as regards growth and decay, and the spirit of the age which was manifested in their work cannot be summarised in

[1] *Orl. Fur.* Canto XVII. st. 74-79. The reader who has the idea that Ariosto is master only of a peculiar irony, and is afraid of the higher emotions should read these Dantesque stanzas in the original setting.

any simple formula. To say broadly (in the manner of the Victorian critic) that the age was licentious and irreligious, and that therefore the poetry of the age must be described by the same epithets is altogether too simple to be true. The age was an age of transition, not an age simply of decay, but an age of growth and replacement. The ideas of Greece and Rome fought with the ideas of mediaeval religion; the highest Paganism with the highest Christianity. The money power ruled in the Court, in the camp, and in the Church, and yet chivalry was not dead, and great battles were fought and great lives were thrown away in the pure spirit of chivalry.[1] Even the Swiss mercenaries at times showed the true spirit of chivalry, as in the battle of Marignano, which lasted three days and nights. In the uncertain moonlight the French king[2] had mistaken a body of Swiss for his own men, and only realised his danger when they pointed six hundred pikes at his nose instead of taking him prisoner. The young captain who gained the bloody battle of Ravenna fought with a bare arm in honour of his lady.

The complex character of the century was reflected in the varied characters of the rulers, but the spirit of the age was not so overpowering as to make the personality of the reigning Marquis a matter of indif-

[1] Cf. Carducci, *Sù l'Orlando Furioso*, pp. 290-291, *Opera cit.* vol. xv.

[2] The French king was Francis I, "a kind of sixteenth-century reincarnation of one of the Paladins of whom Ariosto was singing, as splendid and daring as Orlando." The battle of Marignano, September 1515, is described as a battle of giants, before which the wildest creations of romantic poetry pale, in which the king received knighthood from the hand of Bayard (Gardner, *Ariosto*, p. 133).

ference to his subjects. The Marquises of Ferrara were men of strong will and vigorous character, and the will and the vigour were revealed in many different ways. One of the greatest and shrewdest was deeply religious, at times mystical, at times filled with the spirit of reform. One was a learned scholar who delighted in the new learning and himself wrote Latin verses; another had no Latin, but was a *gourmet* in old French romances. One was never married, for conscientious reasons affecting the succession; another was the most married man of the age, and gave to his illegitimate sons the full rights of legitimate heirs. An attempt will be made to give in a few paragraphs some idea of the rulers of Ferrara, but the method of summary description is not easy of application, and is liable to be misunderstood.

In many respects, no doubt, the dominant morality of the princes of the House of Este was unlike that which is expected of princes of the present time, and especially in what is regarded in most ages as the foundation of all other morality, namely, the treatment of women. The example set by the lover of the beautiful Lippa was frequently followed by his noble descendants. Indeed we are told that for long it was the exception for the sovereigns of Ferrara to be born in lawful wedlock. Bastardy in Ferrara, as in most parts of Italy, was no bar to hereditary right. But at the same time some of these irregular unions, apart from any legal ceremony, were of a very binding character, and the relation was regarded neither

by the prince nor the lady nor the populace as a thing to be ashamed of or concealed. Nicolò III. (1383–1441), for example, who was Marquis when Boiardo was born, and a very Solomon in his attachments, during the lifetime of his first official wife "had a goodly family of sons by other women." Three of these, borne to him by Stella, a beautiful Sienese, were treated by him as legitimate, and at the christening of the first-born in the Duomo there were present as sponsors cardinals, bishops, and ambassadors, and after a solemn procession of the clergy there was a public holiday, with games and tournaments. Two of these sons, namely, the learned Leonello and the magnificent Borso, became notable successors on the throne of their father; the first-born, Ugo, took part with his old father and his young stepmother in one of the greatest tragedies of romantic history.

Nicolò had married as his second lawful wife the Marchesana Parisina. She is described as an ideal great lady of the Middle Ages. Ugo, the first-born of the irregular union of Nicolò with the beautiful Sienese, was treated by his father as heir to the throne. The new stepmother also was expected and encouraged to treat the son with the greatest kindness. In the end the kindness became too intimate, and the guilt of the lovers was betrayed to the father. For one night they were imprisoned in the foulest dungeons, and the next morning, in spite of the intercession of Nicolò's most trusted advisers, they were beheaded. Their bodies were awarded a magnificent funeral, with all the rites of the Church.

The grief of the father and husband verged on madness. "All night the unhappy father and husband paced up and down the halls and passages of his palace in desperate grief, now gnawing his sceptre with his teeth, now calling out passionately upon the name of his dear son or crying out for his own death." And yet we are told that he married again and continued his adulteries to the end of his life.

That the part played by Nicolò in the tragedy[1] of Ugo and Parisina was not condemned by the public morality of the time is shown in a remarkable manner by the opinion expressed by Leonello, the brother of Ugo. Leonello—called by Carducci the greatest of the works of his master Guarino[2]—delighted in the discussions of learned men. In the course of one of these discussions regarding the conduct of Aeneas to Helen Leonello is reported to have said, "You have seen my own father, a more recent and familiar example in this matter (concerning whom I speak not because he is my father, but as fame bears testimony), among the Italian princes by far the most famous for his observances of humanity, justice and piety, when he saw what he fain would not have seen, put to death his wife, together with his son, the

[1] The main story is given by Mr. Gardner, *Dukes and Poets in Ferrara*, p. 38 *sq.* Byron's poem, *Parisina*, considered at the time of publication (1816) "the most exquisitely versified one that ever the author produced" (Moore), is not in conformity with the passage which he himself translated from Frizzi's *History of Ferrara*. "The name of Azo is substituted for Nicholas, as more metrical"—so says Byron in the Preface; and he might have added that the life-long grief of Nicholas—"he was past all mirth and woe"—was substituted for his actual reversion to pleasure as more poetical. There are also other substitutions in the interests of poetical, as distinct from Ferrarese, justice.

[2] See below, p. 22.

stepmother with the stepson. Was my father then condemned on account of this sort of vengeance after the accusation was made public? By no means; but by the general opinion of all the fault remained on the slain."[1]

If according to our standards of customary morality these irregular unions of the House of Este are to be condemned there is something to be said for them from the point of view of our latest moral biology. The progeny from this kind of natural selection was likely to be of strong vitality and strong character.

One of the most notable examples of the "illustrious bastards" of the century under review was Leonardo da Vinci (1452–1519), a man of admirable physique and of almost universal genius: poet and musician, highly skilled in mathematics, pure and applied, in mechanics, hydraulics, and engineering, and world-renowned in architecture, sculpture, and painting. The originality of Leonardo was shown even in his hand-writing; he wrote in the reverse manner, from right to left, so that his MSS. must be read in a mirror.[2] But to return to Ferrara, the noble bastards of that Dukedom might say with Falconbridge, the celebrated bastard of Shakespeare, "Some sins do bear their privilege on earth." Borso, the bastard son of the beautiful Stella and Nicolò III., was one of the handsomest men of the age. Perhaps

[1] Gardner, *Dukes and Poets*, p. 49.

[2] His *Trattato della Pittura* was long considered the best practical Manual, and is full of ingenious devices and curious reflections on men and things of interest to the non-professional reader.

also the openness of the minds of the Ferrarese rulers to new ideas or to the revival of old ideas of a very varied kind is to be ascribed partly to this same natural selection. Leonello, the bastard brother of Borso by the same mother, was the prime mover in the classical Renaissance in Ferrara. But this general recognition of the results of natural selection had its social inconveniences. The rule of succession being uncertain, and bastardy no obstacle, "the beginning of each reign was marked by palace conspiracies and followed by sanguinary executions." If the rule of death was ever broken, as in the case of Giulio,[1] the exceptional mercy shown was worse than the observance of the rule.

It is not to be supposed, however, that the laxity of selection allowed to the man, especially if a prince, was also allowed to the woman, even if of the highest rank. On the contrary, the standard expected to be observed by the wife was as high as it was low in the case of the husband. The virtue of the wife, however, was certainly not simply the result of fear of extreme punishment. The great and magnificent ladies of Ferrara (whether bound by lawful ties or only *per manza*) observed in their hearts and minds, as is shown in many notable cases, the purity outwardly exacted by law and custom. Amongst the noble women immortalised by Ariosto,[2] strange as it may

[1] See below, p. 48.

[2] *Orl. Fur.* Canto XIII. st. 69-72. Lucrezia (st. 70), compared to other famous ladies before her time, is in beauty as silver to tin, as gold to copper, as the rose to a wild poppy, or as the evergreen laurel to the pale willow. Her virtue and honour and good name are equally eulogised.

seem to the ear of popular tradition, was Lucrezia Borgia, Duchess of Alfonso I.[1]

Nor is it to be supposed that all the Estensian rulers were as irregular as Nicolò the Third. Ercole I., under whom Ariosto's father held high office and in whose reign the poet was born, has to his discredit only two lapses, one ante-nuptial and the other extenuated by the prolonged absence of his consort. The result of this second more grave offence was the unhappy Giulio, who fell a victim to his legitimate brother Cardinal Ippolito.[2]

The relations of Alfonso I. to Lucrezia Borgia were not merely correct but of the closest affection. A letter he wrote on her death reads as if straight from the heart: "Nor can I write of her death without tears, so grievous is it to see myself deprived of so sweet and dear a companion as she was to me by reason of her gracious ways and the tender love that there was between us." It was after her death that he took as his mistress the daughter of a capper, the beautiful Laura, who survives in a picture by Titian, and, in the old Ferrarese manner, was the unwedded ancestress of dukes and duchesses.

In the present age it may also be accounted a continuing offence of the House of Este that the reigning prince was always a despot of the most absolute kind. The despotism of the rulers made itself felt even in

[1] Cf. *Orl. Fur.* Canto XLII. st. 83:

> La cui bellezza et onestà preporre,
> Debbe all' antiqua la sua patria Roma.

[2] See below, p. 47.

the minutest details, as is shown by the letters of Ariosto, when he was the governor of the Garfagnana, to his Duke, Alfonso.[1] Nominally, no doubt, his domains were held of the Pope and of the Emperor, but any claim at interference was resisted even to war. In the conflicts that arose between the powers and dominions amongst whom Italy was divided, the ruler of Ferrara had to be reckoned with, either as a peace-maker or as a war lord. On the whole, Ferrara flourished under its despots, and they could always rely on the full support of their people. In the great war of Alfonso against Pope Giulio, when one after another his towns and castles had been taken, and Ferrara itself was threatened, the whole of the people took part in the defence. A graphic account is given by the Marchesana Isabella (one of Ariosto's good women and best of friends), the sister of Duke Alfonso: "I rejoice to hear from all who come from Ferarra that gentlemen, citizens, artists, priests, friars, and women are working with the greatest spirit at the defences."[2] The assistance of the clerics is of special significance, as we are told that owing to the interdict they had no services to perform, and had time on their hands—to employ carnal weapons against the Pope. Occasionally, no doubt, as after some destructive inundation, there are complaints of the exactions of the tax-gatherers, and their odious visits rendered them personally unpopular, and sometimes they were literally torn to pieces by the infuriated mob. But the most

[1] See below, p. 66.

[2] Cappelli, *op. cit.* p. 46 *n.*

oppressive taxes never sapped the loyalty of the people. And it must be recalled that if the taxes were heavy, on the other hand the benevolent despots took a keen interest in public works and institutions. Ercole I., for example, made great improvements in the city and in the adjoining lands, especially by embanking the river, Nicolò Ariosto, the father of the poet, being one of the officials engaged in the work. The despots also gave magnificent displays and pageants to the great delight of the people, and the special benefit of skilled craftsmen and artists of all kinds. The magnificent Borso, the very beau-ideal of magnificence, the first of his house to be honoured with the title of Duke, was celebrated through Italy for such displays. When the magnificent one entered Rome the streets were lined with trees transplanted in his honour, and the Duke's attendants showered money by the handful amongst the people. The details of the pageants of the period show a rare combination of lavish expenditure of money, and a lavish display of artistic genius. The magnificence of the Court had its influence on the magnificence of romantic poetry.

In religion as in morality, in the more narrow sense, the Court of Ferrara is not open to any simple and general condemnation such as was laid by Machiavelli and others on the Court of Rome. "It is due to the Church and the priests that we Italians have lost our religion . . . and if the Roman Court were set up with the same authority in Switzerland, in a short time that simple people

would be equally corrupted."[1] The Courts of Ferrara in ordinary times observed all the requirements of religious ceremony; and some of the rulers were imbued with the spirit of religion. By one of the greatest of the Dukes, Ercole I., the heights of mysticism were attained. The mysticism in his case assumed a curious practical form. In common with other rulers in Italy Ercole sought to attract to his city scholars and artists and all kinds of persons of distinction, but his greatest efforts were made in capturing, or otherwise bringing under his power, the most notable mystics of the day. He used more of the arts of diplomacy and of the power of gold to get possession of Lucia, the saint of Viterbo, than other monarchs have used to get a great accession of territory. He built in her honour a special convent, and then the same arts of diplomacy and expenditure had to be resorted to in order to obtain for Lucia the nuns she specially desired.

Borso, Ercole's predecessor, had set himself in the last years of his life against the corruption and degradation of the Church, and his triumphal reception in Rome by a Pope of similar age and ideals was intended to prepare the way for a purification of the Church; but shortly after both died, as was currently reported, of the same lingering poison administered at a banquet.

In the year that Borso was made Duke of Modena (1452) there was born in Ferrara, Girolamo

[1] *Discorsi su T. Livio*, lib. i. cap. 12.

Savonarola. He was taken by his father to a great entertainment in the ducal palace, perhaps one of the festivities that marked the accession of Ercole I. This "reformer before the reformation" refused again to see the Court, and eventually threw up his medical studies and entered a Dominican monastery. He wrote to his father: "The reason that moves me to enter religion is this: first the great misery of the world, the iniquities of men, the ravishing, the adultery, the robbery, the pride, the idolatry, the cruel blasphemies; for the age is come to such a pass that not one is found who acts rightly."[1] And yet according to the general estimate this was the golden age of Ferrara. "Ercole sincerely loved his people, and throughout his long reign he appears to have retained their affection to the last. . . . He was exact in his religious observances, and his devotion grew upon him, tempering and eliminating the uglier features of his character to the end of his days."[2] Ercole died in 1505 when Ariosto was thirty-one, and was just beginning his *Furioso*. There is reason to believe that the account of the funeral of Brandimarte[3] was founded on the ceremonial at the obsequies of Ercole.[4] For a time Ercole was a great supporter of the reforms of Savonarola.

Romola has made the English reader familiar with the life and influence of Savonarola in Florence. There could be no better illustration of the strange diversities of the times in matters of religion. The

[1] Gardner, *Dukes and Poets*, p. 141.
[2] Gardner, *op. cit.* p. 123.
[3] *Orl. Fur.* Canto XLIII. st. 175 *sq.*
[4] Baruffaldi, p. 127.

Florentines, who under Lorenzo the Magnificent had converted their carnivals into orgies, under the influence of the Dominican made a great funeral pyre for the "vanities" which were most in evidence in these carnivals. It is true that this revulsion to a kind of Italian puritanism did not last very long, but there was always beneath the surface a certain depth of religious feeling that under fitting stimulus would be brought into consciousness and into activity. It has been shown by Villari that the popular belief that in the destruction of the vanities many priceless manuscripts of the classics were included is unfounded, and indeed the reverse of the truth, as Savonarola took special pains to preserve these literary treasures.[1]

Ercole's successor Alfonso I., the second patron of Ariosto, was accused by the Papal Curia of favouring the poisonous doctrines of the heretic Martin Luther.[2] In the age of Ariosto every shade and colour of religion was represented by all sorts of people of importance; the extreme austerity of self-denial, the most corrupt and greedy formalism, mystical ecstasy, rational doubt, and blank agnosticism. The variableness of religious ideals and practices may help to account for the varied attitudes of Ariosto and his large toleration in matters of religion.

In considering the influences of the Estensian rulers on the life and work of Ariosto, stress must be laid on the revival of classical learning promoted

[1] Villari, *La Storia di G. Savonarola*, p. 513 *sq.*
[2] Cappelli, *op. cit.* Document XIV.

by Leonello, and continued, if with less personal interest, by Borso and Ercole.[1]

Ariosto's youth was all Latin, says Carducci,[2] and in his opinion it was the Latin youth which enabled the mature Ariosto to give to the traditions and legends of mediaeval chivalry the classical element that converted rude popular tales into the highest form of romantic poetry. It might also be said of Boiardo[3] that his youth was all Latin, and that his romance was moulded by classicism.

It was not the mere knowledge of Latin and the literary appreciation of the great Latin poets which influenced the youth of Boiardo and Ariosto; if this had been all they would have become, as so many others in so many different ages, mere imitators. But to both of them Latin thought was not dead but living; in their youth they read the Latin for the poetry and not the poetry for the Latin. That the influence of the environment must not be exaggerated is shown by the parallel case of Pulci. Pulci also was brought under the classical influence in his youth in its most enticing forms. Florence under Lorenzo the Magnificent was steeped in classicism, and the greatest classical scholar of the age, Poliziano, also himself a real poet, was Lorenzo's most intimate friend. To this fellowship young Pulci was admitted, and is supposed to have recited his *Morgante* at Lorenzo's banquets. But the in-

[1] This is the main theme of Carducci's delightful essay, *La Gioventù di Ludovico Ariosto e la poesia Latina in Ferrara.* Republished in vol. xv. of his complete works, Bologna, 1905.

[2] *Op. cit.* p. 27.

[3] Cf. Panizzi, *passim.*

fluence on Pulci of the classical environment was almost negligible — he quotes Latin words and phrases but the Latins had no real effect, either on his style or his thought. He may be called the last of the mediaeval romanticists, but not the first of the moderns. As Rajna observes: Pulci's work is *sui generis*, prepared for by the past, but with little influence on the future.[1]

Dante had complained that neither Reggio nor Ferrara nor Modena had produced a great poet, and he found the reason in a certain loquacity of the Lombards to which they are so accustomed, that they cannot get rid of some roughness in the courtly vernacular. How comes it then, asks Carducci,[2] that by the end of the sixteenth century we have a stupendous Ferrarese literature with three great romantic poems? How is it that in the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries, when troubadours and tellers of romances abounded, and chivalry was in full life, when apparently all the conditions were favourable to a new romantic literature, uncramped by classical tradition, romantic poetry in fact degenerated and became grotesque and coarse? The answer is, strangely enough, that the study of Latin, and the discipline of writing Latin verses was required for the making of the true romantic poet. And in Ferrara the study of Latin and the enthusiasm for Latin culture were only possible on the material side by the patronage of the House of Este. A beginning was made by Nicolò, the prince, of the many irregular attachments,

[1] *Op. cit.* p. 21.

[2] *Op. cit.* p. 40.

who sought for a tutor for his natural son Leonello, and found him in Guarino the scholar whom he enticed from Verona. One of his pupils was a kinsman of Ariosto, commonly called Pellegrino, who taught philosophy and civil law in the Studium (or University). He was also, as Carducci says, a semi-poet, and he composed a dramatic eclogue in Latin for presentation to the Court. "It may almost rank as the first of those theatrical entertainments which a little later became the glory of the palace of the Estensi."[1] Of everything there must be a beginning, and the plot of this eclogue is simplicity itself and so is the moral. Here they are:

Carinus, the youthful neighbour of Isis, a beautiful girl, notices that the stream of her lovers has suddenly ceased, and he asks her the reason. She explains that a man of religion, who was a divine orator, had been preaching through the country-side, and had taught her to despise the world and renounce her lovers. She mourns over her misspent youth, and for the rest of her life will give herself to holy meditation. At the end of the performance the stage herald is put on to tell the true intent of the play. "Know," he proclaims, "that this play has been made in the cause of good morals; and of this kind of play the ancient poets did not make many whereby the modesty of youth might profit." Such was the beginning of the poetry of the House of Ariosto. It is interesting to notice that this same Pellegrino also made researches in natural science, illustrating (if only by candle-light)

[1] Gardner's *Ariosto*, p. 4.

the saying of Goethe on the similarity of the genius for science and poetry. He was the first to describe the medical virtues of petroleum, the rock oil which flowed out of the side of Mount Zibio.[1]

The Latin habit grew in Ferrara until every man of culture, or at least every man of letters, thought in Latin. Another kinsman of Lodovico, Malatesta Ariosto, the father of his beloved companion and friend Pandolfo,[2] also wrote various poems in Latin, and was the forerunner of Lodovico in extravagant praises of the House of Este. But unlike his great namesake he praised himself almost as much as he did his prince, and he recited unashamed the long list of his Court poems as deserving of more substantial reward. Like Pellegrino, Malatesta Ariosto is of most interest to the modern reader as a master of pageantry, of which he was not only a chronicler but a designer and practical manager. Carducci has reproduced a very full account of one of his pageants prepared for the triumphal entry of the new Duke, the magnificent Borso, into Reggio. The scenes, mechanical devices, and dresses are all minutely described, and the characters who represent not only the virtues, and other allegorical subjects, but the Pope and the Emperor, and the devil and other realistic personages, are made to speak in Italian verse. This is the very first appearance of Italian verse in the House of Ariosto, and, as Carducci says,

[1] This report or treatise on Petroleum, which was presented to Duke Borso in 1462, had the honour of being published for the first time in Copenhagen in 1690.

[2] See below, p. 39.

deserves examination on that account alone; and he gives a most fascinating description of the ducal progress and of the presentment of Malatesta's pageant.

True, says the modern poet, the Italian verses of Malatesta could not very well have been worse, but by their author they were taken most seriously; and he makes the demand that the persons chosen to speak the words must be able to pronounce and recite "with freedom and ardour and gravity and manner and facility," and that they should seem to understand what they are saying; and he enforces the argument by bringing in the great names of Dante and Petrarca.

The resort to the Italian vernacular in the poetical parts of this pageant was no doubt mainly due to the fact that Duke Borso, who took a keen interest in every detail, had no Latin and was indeed devoid of all scholarship. But in preparing the way for the romantic poetry of Ferrara the succession of the unlearned Borso to the learned Leonello was providential, inasmuch as the former succeeded in tempering the influence of humanism by promoting and protecting the vernacular literature; and so while the classicism planted by Leonello continued to flourish, the *sermone moderno* was also cultivated to correspond with Borso's personal desires.[1]

This vernacular literature was in the main represented by the romances of chivalry, especially in the form of translations from the French, though the original French was also much in fashion in the Court.

[1] Gardner, *op. cit.* p. 85.

Borso himself was a great lover of these old romances, and had Italian versions of them richly illuminated, and took the trouble himself to compare the translations with the originals.

The romances of mediaeval chivalry may be divided into three great groups. In the first the central figure was Charlemagne, a Charlemagne compounded from several historical monarchs of the name of Charles, with a plentiful admixture of fable.[1]

The romances of Charlemagne and his paladins had been current for centuries in Northern Italy amongst the common people, and had become part of the common thought of the time. Every child knew that Orlando, who was born in Italy, was the greatest of heroes, and Gano[2] of Maganza the worst of traitors. The detractors of the House of Este said they were descended from the old traitors of Maganza, and the little boys of Venice sang a couplet to that effect about the Duke of Ferrara. The doings and supposed writings of Archbishop Turpin (the concrete embodiment of the phrase "as romances tell") were as well known as in England the stories attributed to Robin Hood. And not only were the knightly deeds of the paladins familiar to all from their childhood, but equally familiar were the great ideas at the root of the conflict between Christian and Saracen. In fact this conflict

[1] Panizzi, *Essay on the Romantic Poetry of the Italians*, p. 115 *sq.*

[2] The treachery of Gano is the principal theme of the poem *La Spagna*, one of the earliest (? 14th century) of the Italian narrative romances in *ottava rima*. It is also the principal subject of Pulci's *Morgante*. In the *Cinque Canti*, supposed to have been written by Ariosto as a continuation of the *Furioso*, the treachery of Gano is again the principal theme.

was the basis of the Carolingian legends, and in this cycle personal adventures were subordinated to the shock of armies.

But in the Ferrarese Court, and especially under Duke Borso, the romances of the second group, of which King Arthur and his knights of the Round Table were the principal personages, became very fashionable. Boiardo expressly calls attention to this change in romance as exemplified in his own poem.[1]

The third group of romances were the particular adventures of knights and ladies sometimes connected with Charlemagne or King Arthur and sometimes quite independent, as in the adaptations of some of the classical legends by Boiardo and Ariosto.

These romances of the three kinds were not only read, but were recited before the Court for the delight of the lords and ladies. It is probable that the whole of Boiardo's great poem was actually recited by the author, and that the addresses to the audience at the beginning and the end of every canto are not merely literary fashions of speech. It is said[2] by Baruffaldi that Ariosto himself recited parts of his *Orlando* to the Court and that he was an excellent reciter; he developed the introductory address, and certainly kept up the form of recitation in the concluding stanza of every canto.

In the application made by Ariosto to the Doge of Venice on the eve of the first publication of the

[1] Cf. *Orl. Inn.* Bk. II. Canto I. st. 1-3, and specially Bk. II. Canto XVIII. st. 1-3.

[2] *Op. cit.* p. 61. He says Ariosto probably acted in a play of Plautus, given by Duke Ercole I., when he was a boy of twelve.

Orlando (1515), for the privilege of copyright in the Venetian dominions he gives a general description of the work.[1] He writes that with much labour and with long vigils he has composed for the delight of lords and persons of gentle souls, and ladies, a work in which he treats of pleasant and delectable affairs of love and arms.[2]

The first aim of Ariosto as of Boiardo was to please the lords and ladies of the Court, and if Ariosto became by far the most popular poet of the age, he had no intention of writing down to the popular level. In fact it was generally believed that Ariosto was advised by Bembo, his great friend and critic, to write the *Orlando* in Latin, though Carducci has shown the report to be ill-founded. The rejection of Latin as the medium is said by Ariosto himself to be the desire to be the first in Tuscan rather than the second in Latin, and there were no doubt many of the courtiers who favoured Latin ideas and sentiments but did not understand the language. By the time of Ariosto, Latin culture had made so deep an impression on art generally that there was nothing unreal in merging the classical and romantic elements. On the contrary, not to bring in classical forms and ideas would have seemed in the first quarter of the sixteenth century a serious defect.[3]

[1] Cappelli, *op. cit.* Letter XIII. p. 27 *sq.*

[2] The continuation is interesting, as showing that Ariosto wished to have the profit of his work and to prevent piracy; but in fact many pirated editions of all Ariosto's works were printed.

[3] The whole subject has been exhaustively treated by Pio Rajna in *Le Fonti dell' Orlando Furioso*, second edition, Florence, 1900.

For the present purpose, however, the point is not so much the sources of the *Orlando* as the means by which the sources were made available and coloured. The *Orlando* has two main sources: first, the varied types of mediaeval romance, and secondly, the classical poets, especially Latin. The living union of both these great streams of thought and diction became possible through the actual culture of the Ferrarese Court, which provided for the development of the genius of Boiardo and Ariosto a fitting environment and atmosphere.

The influence of the Court of Ferrara in the development of genius has been forcibly expressed by Goethe in the opening scene of *Torquato Tasso*. The comparison drawn between Florence, made a city by the people, and Ferrara, made great by its princes, is all in favour of the latter so far as the encouragement of great minds is concerned.[1] In commenting on the magnificent praise by Goethe of the Ferrarese princes, Carducci remarks that they are well deserved: not, it is true, if applied to the personal patrons of Ariosto, namely, Ippolito and Alfonso, but they are true in the sense that Leonello and his Latin master Guarino created the culture and the literary spirit which converted popular legends into romantic poetry.[2]

[1] "Florence is great and noble, but the worth
Of all her treasured riches doth not reach
The prouder jewels that Ferrara boasts.
That city to her people owes her power;
Ferrara grew to greatness through her princes."
Torquato Tasso, Anna Swanwick's translation.

[2] Cf. Carducci, *op. cit.* p. 39.

THE HOUSE OF ESTE

The influence of the House of Este in the century of Boiardo and Ariosto was threefold: moral, religious, and classical; and in each part the influence was not simple but complex; and in each, beneath the political despotism, the moving spirit was liberty. Mediaevalism was breaking up and modernism taking its place. Ferrara was one of the great centres in which the old and the new were in conflict. All the great world-influences met together in Ferrara, and they all find expression in the varied poetry of Ariosto. As a boy he heard of the capture of Otranto by the Turks, and of the discovery of America and the new route to India. Just as Europe was threatened from the East, so also the East was threatened from the West. Ferrara felt the beginnings of the Reformation and of the counter-Reformation. It was a tumultuous age, and the air was surging with great ideas. If in truth Ariosto expressed the spirit of the age, his poetry cannot be described in the negatives of decadence.

CHAPTER II

FAMILY RELATIONS

NICOLÒ DI RINALDO ARIOSTI, the poet's father, was a soldier, and also held various administrative posts under the Dukes of Ferrara. On the occasion of the visit of the Emperor Frederick III. to Ferrara (1469), Nicolò received the title of Count of the Lateran Palace and of the Holy Roman Empire,[1] with the right to wear the black eagle above the arms of his own House. Apparently the title was hereditary, but Lodovico only used it during his governorship of the Garfagnana,[2] probably to impress his turbulent and primitive subjects. Nicolò was one of the most confidential servants of the magnificent Borso and seneschal of his successor, Ercole I. It is reported[3] that on several occasions he was sent as ambassador to the Pope, the Emperor, and the King of France. But his most memorable mission was of a less lofty

[1] Apparently the title of Count became too common in Ferrara during the lifetime of Lodovico. In his comedy *Cassaria*, in its second form in verse (1526), he satirises the abundance of titles—nearly every one being a count—but there is no corresponding passage in the first edition in prose (1508). *Cassaria*, Act I. sc. v.

[2] See below, Chapter IV.

[3] Carducci, pp. 16, 167.

and less privileged character. When Ercole I. ascended the throne (1471) he was confronted by the rival claims of Nicolò d' Este, the son of the learned Leonello, Borso's predecessor. To the uncle the simplest way out of the difficulty seemed to be the death of the nephew, and Nicolò Ariosto was chosen as the instrument. He was sent to the Court of Mantua, where Nicolò d' Este was staying, with open gifts and secret poisons.[1] On his arrival Ercole's seneschal bribed the seneschal of Nicolò d' Este, with a promise of two castles, a palace in Ferrara, and a large annuity, to take the chief part in the assassination. To this end he gave him a poisoned dagger, and, in case his courage failed, a vial of poison to mix with his master's food. The accomplice seems to have been a villain of very poor spirit, for not only was he afraid to use the dagger, but spoiled the more secret and simple method by his cowardice. He had everything arranged, the food poisoned, and his own brother to serve it, when just before the banquet he was seized with a fit, not of remorse but of giddiness. He feared he had himself been poisoned by accident, or by Nicolò Ariosto, and promptly confessed everything to his master and his master's host, the Marquis of Mantua. He and his brother were hanged, but Nicolò Ariosto escaped to Ferrara, and for his services was made by Ercole captain of the citadel of Reggio. This episode is a graphic instance of the fidelity of the Ariosti to the Estensi. Later on, when Nicolò had fallen on evil

[1] Cappelli, *op. cit.* p. xi.

times, the Duke was reminded that his trusty servant had not only risked his life but his soul for his master.

Two years after his settlement in Reggio, Nicolò married (1473) Daria Malaguzzi, of a noble Reggian family. Her father was a learned man, who combined the writing of science and of poetry, and Lodovico was wont to say that on the mother's side he was literally a born poet. Certainly on that side he was connected with blood as noble and ancient as that of the House of Ariosto. Daria brought to her husband a dowry, extraordinary, as Carducci says, for the time, of a thousand golden ducats, with which he bought lands, arable and vineyard, in the neighbourhood of Reggio. These lands were subject to certain burdens incident on peasant holdings, and in 1486 they were remitted by the Duke on the ground that it was not fitting that a gentleman should be made to pay peasant dues.[1] But Daria brought to her husband besides her golden ducats the priceless gift of a beautiful and noble-hearted woman. Gabriele, the brother of Lodovico, sang her praises in Latin verses,[2]

[1] Campori, *op. cit.* p. 6.

[2] Carducci, p. 170; Panizzi, *op. cit.* p. clxv. Carducci specially praises the lines:

Illam si ferro instructus violasset adulter,
Non peteret ferrum temerata ut solveret aegram
Sede animam et casti repararet damna pudoris;
Sat foret ipse dolor stricti non indigus ensis.

They are closely imitated from the Sonetto of Petrarca, beginning

Cara la vita, e dopo lei mi pare . . .

. . . . . .

Nè di Lucrezia mi maravigliai,
Se non come a morir le bisognasse
Ferro, e non le bastasse il dolor solo.

and especially her inviolable purity of soul. Those who think the idealisation of women in the *Furioso* is extravagant and artificial should remember that Ariosto's own mother was a good woman. In the famous simile in which the joy of the mother is described on the return of her soldier son whom she had given up for dead [1] we seem to see Daria running out to meet the poet—for he, too, fought in a desperate battle.[2] And we know that one of the reasons, and to him in itself sufficient, which in later years forbade Ariosto following his patron Ippolito to Hungary, was that he could not leave his mother, who was then stricken in years. Carducci argues that we may readily believe Daria was a woman out of the common, because all great poets derive from the mother the distinctive marks of genius. Certainly there is not much of the poetical temperament to be discovered in Nicolò the father. In 1486 he returned to Ferrara, and was made Judge of the twelve Sages. This office was in effect the head of the municipal government, and the principal business was apparently to bear the brunt of the odium attendant on the despotical interferences of the Duke with the property and liberty of his subjects. The elder Ariosto had already risked his soul for his master, and he was not likely to stick at risking his own personal popularity.

[1] *Orl. Fur.* Canto I. st. 53. In Harrington's version:

> With how great joy a mother's mind is fil'd
> To see a sonne for whom she long had mourned,
> Whom she heard late in battell to be kil'd
> And saw the troopes without him home returned.

[2] Possibly Ravenna, the slaughter in which is described in Capitolo XII.

A born aristocrat, he was probably more ducal than the Duke in his relations to the people. His own colleagues protested against his election, and the citizens consoled themselves by keeping in circulation a set of atrocious satires embalming his many bad qualities. The embalming was so efficient that some twenty-three of the sonnets have survived, and were published about half a century ago, apparently (it is to be hoped) for the greater glory of the poet's mother. Nicolò is described as the devourer of the city of Ferrara, an insatiable robber, of brazen face, and with a maw that can swallow wood, marble, iron, or anything even harder. He is accused of buying his lands and enlarging his house by peculations from the commune. There is a dramatic version of a peasant coming to him to complain of being robbed of bed and cloak by Nicolò's steward on a false pretence of labour-dues not fulfilled. The peasant has brought with him a fat lamb to sell in the market: Nicolò receives the complaint, says the steward has done wrong—"but think no more of it; many thanks for the lamb; without it I would have seen you quite willingly." In vain the peasant protests he has a wife and five children, and the lamb is to be sold to buy them food; he is threatened with prison, and is glad to escape with his life and without his lamb. But the remarkable thing is that in all this abuse of Nicolò there is never a word against Daria. On the contrary, she is introduced as trying to restrain the extortions of her husband.[1] The Duke

[1] Carducci, p. 175.

supported his faithful servitor—who had lent him money—against the other Sages and against the people, but after three years the discontent became too rampant, and Nicolò was promoted to the captaincy of Modena. The satirist gave him a parting shot, and Modena is made to lament the arrival of the evil beast which, like the wolf in Dante, is the more famished the more it eats. Of the doings of Nicolò in Modena nothing is recorded, that city perhaps not having a poet equal to the task, but after five years we find him at Lugo as ducal Commissary for the Romagna. There by the violence of his temper and an act of gross and cruel injustice, of which curiously enough he was so proud that he himself wrote a report to the Duke,[1] he passed the limit of ducal condonation, and was deprived of his office and sentenced to a heavy fine (fines of this sort being one of the principal sources of the ducal revenue). Four years later he died in disgrace (February 1500). If Nicolò was adjudged by his satirist a bad man, by his great son he was revered as a good father, as is recorded in a Latin ode. "Lodovico did well to write of his father with affection and honour, and he could do so the more sincerely as he had inherited not the remotest trace of the temperament which in his father was manifested in avidity, guile, and harshness. There is genuine feeling in the tribute also of Gabriele, in the verses on the father in the Latin poem[2] written on the death of

[1] Ercole I. was then under the influence of Savonarola.

[2] This poem is reprinted in full by Panizzi, Appendix to the *Life of Ariosto*, p. clxvi. The lines beginning, "Nec te care parens . . ."

Lodovico."[1] His basic fault was excess of fidelity to his chief, who treated him as the old kings of England were wont to treat their Jews. He seems to have left little wealth beyond the lands bought with Daria's dowry, so that the bulk of his exactions no doubt passed into the Duke's exchequer. Besides the Latin ode, Lodovico wrote an epitaph on his father in Italian, but for some reason, not very clear, was dissatisfied with it and put it aside, and eventually used it for another and less appropriate subject. A fitting epitaph might be taken from the tomb of the old Highlander who sleeps in the ruined churchyard of Durness :

> Donald MacMurchie here lies lo,
> Was ill to his friend and waur to his foe,
> True to his master in wierd and wo. ,,

Lodovico, like so many other poets, had been destined by his father to the Law, and he has left a lively account of his aversion to texts and glosses. It is told of him also, as of Pope and others, who lisped in numbers, that as a child he wrote a play (*Tisbe*), acted by his numerous brothers and sisters. On a later occasion, when his father was reproving him for being backward in his studies of the law, the reproof being emitted with some passion, the youthful poet listened with the absorbed interest of the dramatist who was even then composing a comedy which had as a principal part an enraged father. So Lodovico explained his apparent callousness to an alarmed younger brother.

[1] Carducci, p. 178.

There must have been a soft spot in the heart of the rugged Nicolò for his eldest son, for his insistence on study of the law gave way when the poet was only twenty, and he was allowed to follow his own bent and to have a good time. He played in Court pageants and in the presentment of the comedies of Plautus. He read the Latin poets with real delight, and probably with still greater delight the great romantic poem of Boiardo; he is said, like Scott, to have devoured all kinds of romances. The welding of the classical and the romantic in Ariosto was no artificial effort, but the natural result of plastic youth. He has written in one of the misnamed Satires[1] (autobiographical letters in verse) that at the age of twenty he cared not to learn Greek, "because I should think it no honour to be skilled in the tongue of the Acheans if I did not first of all understand the speech of my Latins."

And when he was satisfied with his Latins, and was naturally turning to the Greeks whom they had imitated, the tutor who might have given him the key was called away, greatly to the regret of Ariosto.[2] Ariosto's devotion to his Latins to the exclusion of Greek was perhaps fortunate, because he entered with a whole heart into the mediaeval tradition of the Latin as the superior race. According to this widespread belief[3] the Trojans were not only the ancestors

[1] Sat. VI. vv. 178-180.

[2] There is some evidence that Ariosto did after all know Greek enough for the purposes of imitation of construction (Carducci, *op. cit.* p. 253), but he was ever a modest recorder of his own accomplishments.

[3] Cf. Panizzi, *Romantic Poetry of the Italians*, p. 141.

of the Romans but of other great nations, and in the Siege of Troy the Greeks gained their only advantage by treachery. The great hero was not Achilles but Hector, and the arms of Hector with his shield and sword had survived in all their glory to the age of the Charlemagne of mediaeval legend, and play a great part in the combats of the heroes of Boiardo and Ariosto. Had Ariosto read Homer and the Greek tragedians at first hand his Latin sympathies might have been rather blunted.

Lodovico Ariosto, born in "joyous" Reggio on the 8th of September 1474, was under twenty-six on the death of his father, and he promptly took on his shoulders the care of his mother, four younger brothers (of whom the devoted Gabriele was a cripple), and five sisters. He was forced to abandon his classical studies, and to look most minutely into house-books [1] and petty economies.[2] He had to find dowries for his sisters without impoverishing the family estate. He had to look after his little brothers, to whom he stood in place of a father;[3] to put one to the law, to get for another a place at Court, to make another a soldier, and to let the cripple Gabriele, who worshipped him, follow *longo intervallo* his own footsteps in the fields of poetry. If the first youth of Ariosto was all for his Latins, his second youth was all for his father's family. And it is not to be

[1] Baruffaldi gives examples of his accounts. His lands were let with the stock on a kind of *métayer* system. Pp. 97, 98.

[2] Sat. VI. v. 199 *sq.*

[3] Sat. VI. vv. 209, 210: "To see that their pliant minds were not turned from virtue to vice."

supposed that his task was easy and natural, and was fulfilled without any personal effort or real self-sacrifice. In that same Satire VI.,[1] in which he tells of the death of his father and the duties imposed on him, it is written: "My life was then burdened with so many troubles that I longed for fate to cut its thread." And that the wheel of fortune should carry him to the lowest point, at this very time he lost by death his relative and most beloved companion Pandolfo, "my kinsman, friend, brother, my soul, not the half but all my soul, with not a part of it left to myself."[2] If in these afflictions he wrote Court poems that flattered, and if he wrote with an afterthought of Court favour or payment, is he to be blamed? He had given up the profession of law, he disliked soldiering, though on occasion he did his part for his country, and his only hope for his father's family was in the patronage of the Court.

There can be no question that Lodovico himself prized above everything else independence and personal liberty. In the third Satire, in reply to the question whether he found the service of Duke Alfonso less burdensome than that of his brother the Cardinal, he answers plainly that one burden is as distasteful as the other; and that had it not been for his brothers and sisters he would have put himself under no yoke. He was a lover of the simple life; he cared little for honours, and less for banquets and wine, though he delighted in pageants and the comedies of the stage and the comedies of life. But

[1] Vv. 214-216. [2] Sat. VI. v. 220 *sq.*

the independence that he loved and "the small house with the large garden" he was forced to surrender for the sake of his mother and her children. Even when late on in life he met his ideal in Alessandra he could not openly acknowledge his marriage owing to his poverty, and this poverty was due to his sacrifice of himself for his family. He would have preferred never to go far from his native nest, but he was sent post-haste over hill and dale in peril of his life in the service of his masters. Yet he never once complained. He took it all for granted: "Here is the little Gabriele: what is to be done with him? From his childhood he has been crippled in foot and arm. . . . For the fifth sister I had to make up a dowry. . . . The age of my mother fills my heart with pity, and it would be infamous if she were left by all of us at once."[1] It would be difficult to find a parallel to the life-long devotion of Ariosto to his mother and to the family left by his father.

[1] Satire II. v. 205 *sq.* The reference is to a time when Ariosto was forty-three years of age.

CHAPTER III

THE POET AND THE CARDINAL

Ariosto's career as a Court poet began with a Latin poem on the marriage (1502) of Alfonso, the heir to the Dukedom of Ferrara, to Lucrezia Borgia. A little before, Ariosto had been appointed Captain of the Rocca of Canossa. Probably the office was not of a very onerous character, and did not involve continuous residence,[1] and Ariosto does not refer to it by name; though he describes his happy life at that period,[2] within easy reach of his native Reggio and the delightful country residence of the kinsman to whom he sent his poetical reminiscences from the very different scene of the Garfagnana. But however delightful might have been this year of his life he was obliged to give up his captaincy and return to Ferrara, probably, as always, owing to his family affairs.

About the end of 1503, when Ariosto was twenty-nine, he entered the service of the Cardinal Ippolito, the brother of Alfonso. He speaks of this service as being a heavy yoke,[3] which turned a poet into a

[1] Campori, p. 13. [2] Satire IV. v. 115. [3] Satire VII. v. 234.

messenger, for ever riding on his master's business, and having no time for learning "Greek or Chaldean," or generally going on with his studies. Apparently, however, the poet, in spite of his poverty and afflictions and family cares, found time for carrying on some of those diverse loves, of which he has left an account hidden in Latin verses.[1] In his early life Ariosto had the temperament of Burns or Byron; but it would be unjust to say that his life was at any period licentious,[2] and his "mobility," as he termed it, vanished with the absorbing passion for Alessandra. The various excuses that have been offered for this mobility and its consequences—the influence of the Latin poets,[3] the morals and the manners of the age, and the perfervid mind of Lodovico himself—may be put aside with the summing up of the genial Harrington: "Now though I dare not excuse him in this so great a fault, yet partly in respect he was unmarried, partly because these white divils have such a tempting power upon the earth, methinks I should easily obtain a pardon for him, of all you that read this short discourse of his life." Ariosto himself has left on record his considered opinion: "I have always been of opinion, and many times I have said so, that without a wife by his side no man can attain perfect goodness or live without sin."[4] And he laments that by various accidents he was prevented himself from entering the married state. The chief reason no doubt was his poverty, and

[1] *De diversis amoribus*, Carducci, *op. cit.* p. 239; Gardner's *Ariosto*, pp. 293, 294.

[2] Cf. Carducci, *op. cit.* p. 189 *sq.*

[3] Baruffaldi, p. 96.

[4] Satire V. v. 13.

the fact that when he was engaged in the service of the Cardinal his principal payment was obtained from offices of a quasi-ecclesiastical character (like the old fellowships in Cambridge or Oxford) which involved celibacy.

Ariosto had two illegitimate sons, whom he treated in every way as if they had been born to him in wedlock, following the custom that prevailed in Italy[1] at the time when bastardy was no bar to hereditary right, even in the highest positions. It should be remembered that natural children could be legitimated without subsequent marriage on the part of the parents. Both sons of Ariosto were legitimated, and in the case of Virginio, the younger, the legal process was gone through a second time, as some doubt had arisen in the mind of the father as to the technical correctness of the first. Ariosto was a devoted father, and took the greatest pains in the education of this younger son.[2] The elder was brought up by the mother's family, and became a captain of arbusquiers in the service of the Duke of Ferrara. Virginio, like his father, obtained some quasi-ecclesiastical offices, and eventually entered the Church. Some stress has been laid in this place on Ariosto's views on marriage, as the celebrated curses on woman put in the mouth of Rodomont[3] at a dramatic moment are often alluded to as the opinions of Ariosto himself.

The relations of Ariosto to Cardinal Ippolito

[1] See above, p. 9. [2] See Satire VI. *passim*.
[3] *Orlando Furioso*, Canto XXVII. st. 117-121.

deserve special consideration, not only because he spent the prime of his life in his service, but also because his excessive glorification of the House of Este, and in particular of Ippolito, has always been considered the chief blot on the construction of the *Orlando Furioso* and on the poet's own good name. In the case of the Cardinal the praise is so fulsome and so undeserved that the most natural and certainly the easiest interpretation seems to be veiled irony, but so favourable a judgment does not seem to accord either with the natural reading of the poem or with the facts of Ariosto's life.

The fabulous origin of the House of Este in the marriage of Rogero and Bradamant is the principal motive of the poem, and the chief representative of that house is Ippolito. It would be out of harmony with the main idea to consider the references to Ippolito as intentionally satirical. Nor on the other hand can we suppose that Ariosto, who was versed in the affairs of Courts from his youth and a master of comedy, was not aware that his praises were exaggerated. Even when all allowances are made for his devotion to the House of Este and for loyalty to his patron and for his own irrepressible good nature, a good deal of the praise can only be ascribed to the flattery of the Court poet. The questions involved in the ethics and in the art of Court poetry are too complex to be here considered. The adulation of Ariosto has given Ippolito an immortality that he would not otherwise have obtained. His only other claim to be remem-

bered was an atrocious outrage on his bastard brother,[1] with disastrous consequences; and even in this case oblivion might have been secured but for the eulogies of Ariosto on the criminal and an attempted apology for the crime. Probably there is no other case in history in which poetical flattery has been so converted by the revenges of time into poetical justice.

Ippolito d' Este was the son of Ercole, the mystical Duke and sometime follower of Savonarola, and of Leonora of Aragon, who was not only a good woman but a good Duchess. If the qualities of Ippolito are to be sought in heredity it must be in a mixture of reversions; if they were acquired from parental guidance and example it must be by what is called a natural reaction. Ippolito was born in 1479, five years after Ariosto, and the evil that he did (and much of it lived after him) was compressed into a life of less than forty-two years. He died of over-eating shell-fish in 1520. As third son he was destined from his birth for the Church, and at the age of nine he was made Archbishop of Ezstergom in Hungary. Before he was fifteen he was created a Cardinal (at the same time as Cesare Borgia). In the course of time he became Archbishop of Milan and Bishop of Ferrara, not to mention other lucrative spoils. We have the best of evidence in letters from his own father that he was quite unfitted for the Church.[2] The militancy of the Cardinal, for which he was so severely upbraided by his religious

[1] See below, p. 47.

[2] Gardner, *Dukes and Poets in Ferrara*, App. II. Documents XV., XX.

parent, was in the opinion of some writers his only redeeming virtue. Like Alfonso, the brother who succeeded to the Dukedom, he was a man of war from his youth up, and in the struggles of Ferrara against Venice and the Pope he proved himself an efficient and brave soldier. Even after allowing for the extravagance of the eulogies of Ariosto a substratum of military achievement remains. It is even possible that the Cardinal used his influence to check, to some extent, the horrors of civil war. He was also an accomplished diplomatist, in which art he had the advantage of being devoid of conscience or regard for truth. Apparently after his own personal greed was satisfied he used his abilities for the advancement of his house, and especially the reigning Duke Alfonso ; the only being, it is said, who mourned for his death. But if this amount of brotherly affection can be placed to his credit, on the debit side there is the story of Giulio and its horrible sequel.

This Giulio was the natural son of the pious Ercole, and had been recognised by his father though born under the shelter of the name of a lesser noble. It fell out that there came to Ferrara in the train of Lucrezia Borgia, when she married Alfonso (1502), another beautiful Borgia named Angela. This lady in the first year of Alfonso's reign (1505) attracted the love of both Giulio and Ippolito—for the latter paid not even an outward observance to his vows of chastity. Angela gave the preference to Giulio, and she is reported to have said to the Cardinal in response to a passionate declaration that "your

brother's eyes are worth more than the whole of your person."[1] This *spretae iniuria formae* was more than Ippolito could bear. He commanded his servants to lie in wait for Giulio on a hunting excursion, and to pierce his beautiful eyes with rapiers. The eyes were pierced, though by the surgical skill of the time eventually the sight of one eye was partially restored. The deed done, the Cardinal himself brought the news to Alfonso that Giulio had been blinded by unknown hands. The Duke in a fury of passion ordered the fullest investigation. But the Cardinal had taken the precaution of at once sending the malefactors to Venice. In the end no one was punished, and in spite of the complicity of Ippolito being well known, in less than two months a reconciliation was effected and he returned to Ferrara and the favour of the Duke. But the outrage on Giulio was only the first act of the tragedy. Ferrando, second and legitimate son of Ercole I. (and until Alfonso's marriage should bear fruit the heir to the Dukedom), having quarrelled with Alfonso, conspired to kill him and seize the throne. Giulio was persuaded to join in the venture with the bribe that Ippolito was to share the fate of Alfonso. But in accordance with the well-known opinion of Machiavelli in his *Florentine Histories*, if it is difficult to kill one tyrant it is impossible at the same time to kill two.[2] The conspiracy was discovered by the observant wisdom

[1] Gardner, *Dukes and Poets*, p. 498.
[2] Cappelli, *op. cit.* p. xxv *sq.* and Doc. IV.

of Ippolito. Ferrando threw himself on the mercy of the Duke, who forthwith struck him in the eyes with a staff to put him in other respects on a level with Giulio. Giulio, who had taken refuge with Isabella, his sister at Mantua, was finally surrendered to Alfonso and brought in chains to Ferrara. In spite of petitions and prayers the two brothers were sentenced to death, and it was only on the scaffold that the sentence was commuted to imprisonment for life. Ferrando outlived Ippolito and Alfonso, and died in prison twenty-five years after (1540). Giulio was released forty years after the death of Ippolito. "In 1559, more than half a century after the conspiracy, an old half-blind man appeared in the streets of Ferrara, clad in the costume of a bygone age. It was Don Giulio d' Este, released from his captivity at the accession of Alfonso's grandson—that second Alfonso, after whose death the sovereignty of the House of Este was to come to an end."[1] Such

[1] Gardner, *Dukes and Poets*, p. 524. Ariosto wrote an Eclogue (*Rime*, op. cit. p. 459) in which, under a very thin disguise, he describes the principal characters concerned with the conspiracy. The Eclogue is in the form of a dialogue between two shepherds, and in the mouth of one conjectured to stand for Ariosto himself are put extravagant praises of Alfonso and his Duchess, Lucrezia Borgia. "Unmistakably vile is the poem which Ariosto wrote on this occasion," says Mr. Gardner (*Ariosto*, p. 49) with unwonted and, I think, undeserved severity. It is true that Ariosto at the beginning, to account for the treachery of Giulio, reports as common gossip that he was not in reality the son of Ercole, his reputed father. It can hardly be supposed this scandal was a pure invention of the poet. Again, the excessive praise of Alfonso and Lucrezia at the end of the Eclogue is quite in accord with the treatment in the *Furioso*. In fact in the *Furioso*, Canto XIII. st. 69 *sq.*, Ariosto has adapted from the Eclogue (*op. cit.* p. 468) the similes in praise of Lucrezia. It is also noteworthy that, though Ariosto was at this time in the service of Ippolito, he does not seize the occasion to praise him, though he did so later in the *Furioso*, for the suppression of the conspiracy.

was the justice and the mercy of the Dukes of Ferrara.

Ariosto remained in the service of Cardinal Ippolito for fourteen years (1503–1517). He was a gentleman of the Cardinal's Court, which was large and riotous, and probably with his tastes he considered it a privilege that he was not obliged to dine at his master's table.[1] He could hardly have made a more unfortunate choice of a patron of letters if he had any real choice in the matter. His Maecenas was, for that age, singularly wanting in appreciation of art and artists of any kind, though he followed the fashion of the times in keeping in his establishment a certain number of mathematicians, scholars, and poets, as he kept falconers and masters of hounds and others who were supposed to add some lustre to his Court. Ariosto's real duties were to act as confidential agent or messenger in the various political intrigues in which the Cardinal was engaged. After the accession of Alfonso to the Dukedom the Cardinal was his principal adviser in peace and in war, and the diplomatic duties of Ariosto became very onerous. The devotion of Ariosto to the House of Este was far too great, as had also been the case with his father, to be ascribed only to self-interest. His active life during his service with the Cardinal is a record of journeys and interviews in which he literally played with death (to use his own words). An interesting controversy has arisen as to whether Pope Giulio II. threatened to throw Ariosto into the sea or into the

[1] Baruffaldi, *op. cit.* p. 118.

Tiber, but there seems to be no doubt that Ariosto carried his diplomacy to the verge of personal safety.[1] It was on one of these journeys in winter that Ariosto caught the cough which troubled him the rest of his days and probably shortened his life. There is no doubt that the value of his services was quite understood and appreciated, though it was not rewarded.

Under the patronage of the Cardinal, such as it was, Ariosto wrote not only his *Orlando Furioso* but also most of his comedies and many of his minor poems. It is proof of the extraordinary fertility and facility of his genius that in such circumstances he should have been able to accomplish so much. It is believed that he began to write the *Orlando* about 1505, and finished it some ten years later. It was published in April 1516. Although in the final edition (1532) six new cantos were added and other changes introduced, the poem was in all essentials completed in this first form. With regard to the publication itself the story of the reception by the Cardinal of a copy from the hands of the poet if not well founded is certainly well found. The story runs that when the Cardinal glanced over the poem —in which he received the most extravagant praise ever bestowed on mortal man—he asked the poet: "Where did you get all this stuff?" In different versions different Italian words have been used to describe the particular kind of stuff the Cardinal wished to indicate, some of them mildly jocular, others untranslatable (Panizzi). Recent criticism has

[1] Campori, p. 23 *sq.*

tried to prove that the Cardinal could not or would not have used the expression in any form, that he took a real interest in the production of the *Furioso*, so real that he bore some of the expenses of the printing, and that he even bought a copy. But the summary dismissal of Ariosto from his service a year later shows well enough the value placed by the Cardinal on his poetry. The poet had declined to go with Ippolito to Hungary for several very good reasons, any one of which ought to have sufficed.[1] His health was poor, and as the best physicians told him, his life would be endangered; he heard with horror of the manner of living in Hungary; of the rooms heated with stoves and crowded humanity; of the food highly spiced; of the strong drink and the numerous toasts; of the severe winter; and then there were the claims of his mother and his brothers and sisters and his own sons, beloved though illegitimate. And another reason was the settlement of Alessandra Benucci in Ferrara.[2]

Not only was the poet dismissed, but he was deprived of most of the offices on which his living depended. But what hurt him most of all was the personal rudeness and animosity of the Cardinal, who accused him of want of good faith and affection when none ought to have known better that Ariosto had given his life to the service of the House of Este.[3]

Ariosto's first comedy, the *Cassaria*, was played before the Court by the command of Ippolito in 1508.

[1] Satire II. [2] See below, p. 55.
[3] Satire IV. v. 131 *sq.*

It was constructed on the models of Plautus and Terence, and with the exception of the prologue was written in prose. Later, Ariosto rewrote his comedies in verse, and some of the changes are interesting, as, for example, in the *Cassaria* the reference to the quantity and the quality of the counts in Ferrara. In spite of the close imitation of his Latins in the first lines of the prologue, he says he is presenting a new comedy, such as has not been given on the stage either in Greek or Latin. And he goes on to justify his modernism by insisting that though the modern prose and verse may be inferior to the ancient, the great Artist has made the genius of man not different from what it was in the old times.[1]

This defence of modernism gives us some idea of the beginnings of the slavish imitation of classical forms which was to follow, and which perhaps justifies Rajna's opinion that if Ariosto had been born thirty years later he would have sacrificed his romanticism to the classical unities. Such as it was, the "newness" of the comedy was sufficient to earn for Ariosto the title of the writer of the earliest extant pure comedy of Europe in a modern tongue.[2]

It is of interest to notice at the present time that the songs and dances and scenery, in the opinion of

[1] The reference to God as the great Artist has nothing irreverent in it, any more than the designation of Him as the great Astronomer in the *Image of the World*, the celebrated poetical encyclopaedia of mediaeval learning. Cf. Langlois, *La Connaissance de la nature et du monde au moyen âge*, p. 76, Paris, 1911.

[2] *Early Plays from the Italian*, by R. Warwick Bond, Introductory Essay, p. lxi. Panizzi, *Life of Boiardo*, p. xlii, quotes Guingené to the effect that *Il Timone* of Boiardo may be regarded as the first comedy written in the vulgar tongue.

one courtly reporter at least, were considered of more importance than the mere words.[1]

Ariosto's next comedy was described by the same observer as "entirely modern, all delightful and full of moralities and words and deeds that raised great laughter."[2] This comedy was the *Suppositi*. The prologue, which the poet recited himself, acknowledges his indebtedness to Plautus and Terence, but the imitation is transmuted by Ariosto into living scenes and words. It was Englished, under the title *Supposes*, by George Gascoigne in 1566,[3] and became in part the source of Shakespeare's *Taming of the Shrew*.

If the origins of modern comedy may in this way be associated with the patronage of Ippolito, it is probable also that the coarse jokes and innuendoes were put in for the especial benefit of that prelate. The comedy was played in Rome ten years later before Leo X., who also laughed heartily at the jokes which scandalised the foreign visitors.[4] Too much stress has been laid by some modern critics on the wit *à la Cardinal*, by which Ariosto's comedies were disfigured, and too little on the lively representation of the manners of the times and on the dramatic qualities of the plays. If the comedies of Ariosto are to be condemned for their moralities by the same measure, most of the comedies, including the classical models, written before our Victorian age, would stand condemned. The weakness of the comedies of Ariosto from the modern point of view is not in the

[1] Gardner, *op. cit.* p. 323.
[2] *Ibid.* p. 325.
[3] Bond's edition, *op. cit.* p. lxiv.
[4] Gardner, *op. cit.* p. 328.

tone, but in the difficulties that arise from the use of one scene only, and the use of stage devices and accidents that have now become too familiar by constant repetition.

In February 1513 died Giulio II., the irascible Pope, who had in his later years been the great enemy of the House of Este. He was succeeded by Giovanni de' Medici under the title of Leo X. Ariosto had been an intimate friend of the prelate, and when he was chosen to convey the congratulations of the Duke of Ferrara it was generally expected by his friends that he would receive from the new Pope some substantial token of his favour. One biographer indeed asserts that there was an idea that Ariosto would be made a cardinal.[1]

Ariosto has left a graphic account of his interview with Leo.[2] The Pope showed himself very willing to hear the congratulations and to accept the homage from Ferrara; he took Ariosto by the hand and kissed him on both cheeks; but (says the poet) "being very short-sighted, and thinking it beneath the dignity of a Pope to wear glasses, although he heard him well enough, he had some difficulty in seeing him; and the other friends of the poet ("newly become great") being desirous of imitating the Holy Father also made as if they did not see him. Lodovico remained at Rome some two months,[3] but so great was the crowd of suitors and so small the persistence of Ariosto in his own interest that he

[1] Baruffaldi, p. 146. [2] Satire IV.
[3] Baruffaldi, p. 145.

obtained no more than the remission of half some trifling fee.[1]

On his return to Ferrara he went by way of Florence, where there happened to be going on the celebrations of St. John the Baptist; and Ariosto, who was a lover of pageants, thought to soothe his mind after his Roman disillusion with the Florentine festivities. He found a greater consolation than he had dreamed of in meeting Alessandra Benucci, the young widow of Tito Strozzi, who had died a little time before.[2] In one of his greatest poems (Canzone I.) Ariosto describes the meeting in Florence "the day, the year, and the place." He had come like other people to see the celebrations, but little can he remember, and little he cares for anything else: there remains fixed in his mind the immortal memory that "I never saw in all that beautiful city anything more beautiful than you." Ariosto had seen Alessandra before, and had been attracted by her, but so long as her husband lived had restrained his love. Alessandra, owing to her recent mourning, was dressed in black, but the silk had been embroidered over with the intertwining leaves of two vines, and a jewelled laurel on the forehead led the eye to the masses of golden hair, and in the black robe and the twisted vines and the jewelled laurel the poet believed there was hidden some divine or fateful mystery. The mystery was ever after recalled to Ariosto by the device he adopted of a

[1] Cappelli, *op. cit.* lvii., and Letter XII.
[2] Baruffaldi, p. 147.

black pen with a fringe of gold.[1] For the rest of his life Alessandra became the dominant influence. She returned his love, and to be near him established herself in Ferrara.

It is conjectured that it was in 1525 that Ariosto formally married Alessandra, and even then their marriage was kept secret, owing to the fact that Ariosto, though not in orders, held certain offices which technically involved celibacy. They lived in separate houses, and Ariosto visited his wife by day in the guise of secretary. The widow of Tito Strozzi had been left very ill provided for, with three children, and in this very year of her second marriage she writes of her poverty and her dependence on others, including a brother of the murdered Ercole Strozzi.[2] It is clear that the poet was not able to afford the public acknowledgment of his wife, though the enforced separation or secrecy of meeting was a matter of constant and deep regret. It is a remarkable proof of Ariosto's unselfishness that he should have joined his poverty with that of Alessandra, when he had at length been relieved of the affectionate obligations which he undertook on the death of his father.

Alessandra was a woman of great beauty, above the common height, and a charming personality. Although there is no evidence that she had the culture of some of the women of that age, she un-

[1] Baruffaldi, p. 156; and Panizzi, p. xlvi. Ariosto always refused to explain the reason for adopting this device (Capitolo II.).

[2] See below, Chapter IV.

doubtedly had considerable influence on Ariosto's poetry. His fateful meeting with her in Florence took place three years before the publication of the first edition of the *Orlando*, and she is said to have encouraged or commanded him to send her a revised canto every month. In the second stanza of the first canto the reference is no doubt to Alessandra; it runs (in Harrington's version):

> I will no lesse Orlando's acts declare,
> (A tale in prose ne verse yet sung or said)
> Who fell bestraught with love, a hap most rare,
> To one that erst was counted wise and stayed;
> If my sweet *Saint* that causeth my like care,
> My slender muse afoord some gracious ayd,
> I make no doubt that I shall have the skill,
> As much as I have promised to fulfil.

Although the poem was ten years in the making it was subject to constant revision, and there is nothing improbable in this early reference to Alessandra. There can be no doubt that she is the lady referred to in the description of the statues in the palace of the knight of Mantua.[1]

[1] Canto XLII. st. 93-95. Eight statues of beautiful women form part of a fountain. Except the last all are named historical personages, the first being Lucrezia Borgia, and each has for a base two poets, also named, one of Lucrezia's being Ercole Strozzi (see below, p. 62). The last statue has only one poet, and neither is named—plainly Alessandra and Ariosto.

CHAPTER IV

THE POET AND THE DUKE

ARIOSTO was dismissed from the service of the Cardinal in September 1517, about a year after the publication of the *Orlando*. The success of the poem was instantaneous and universal. The greatest literary critic of the age, Machiavelli, wrote of it that it was all beautiful and in some places wonderful, and the only complaint he had to make was that when so many other poets were mentioned his name had been forgotten.[1] Parts of the poem had already been read or recited by Ariosto. He is said to have been an excellent reciter,[2] and he is known to have acted in his own plays. As evidence of the popularity of the *Orlando Furioso*, and of the critical ear of Ariosto in the matter of recitation, a story is told that one day as he was passing by a potter's shop he heard the potter singing some verses from the *Orlando*, and he was so enraged by the murderous recitative that he broke some of the finished pots. On the potter protesting, the poet is reported to have said that it was only a fitting return for his marring his verses

[1] Panizzi, *op. cit.* p. ix.

[2] Baruffaldi, p. 168.

by his singing. A similar story is told of Dante and a smith, and if neither story is true both are indirect evidences of popularity. But the success of the *Orlando* made no difference to the decision of the Cardinal, that Ariosto must choose between Hungary and dismissal. Dismissal meant the loss of the greater part of his income, and Ariosto was too poor to remain independent. There is evidence[1] that Ariosto took great pains to secure, as far as possible, the copyright of his works; but there is also evidence that in spite of their great popularity he made very little out of them—he himself says not enough to buy a new mantle. One reason was that there were many pirated editions, and another was that as between author and printer the distribution of gains was altogether in favour of the latter.[2]

In April 1518 Duke Alfonso, the elder brother of the Cardinal, took Ariosto into his service. "Besides a monthly allowance of about thirty-eight shillings, and provisions for three servants and two horses, which Ariosto had received from the Duke, he is said by some writers to have also enjoyed a kind of pension."[3] Whatever it was the pay was not large, and it was soon to prove uncertain.

The change of masters was certainly a change for the better, but the new patron was a man of strong character and had the defects of his nature and of

[1] Cappelli, pp. 27, 28.

[2] On the continued popularity of the *Furioso* see Panizzi, Bibliographical notices of editions of Ariosto appended to the *Life*, p. 51. In ten years, 1542–1551, he calculates that at least 100,000 copies were published in and out of Italy.

[3] Panizzi, p. xxxi.

his position. On the good side he was a patron of arts and letters, but he wrote a letter to Raphael (or rather wrote to his agent a message which he was to deliver to the painter) in terms and tone which in these days the German Emperor would not apply to a photographer. "We do not think fit to write to Raphael da Urbino," but the agent is to find him and tell him that is not the way to treat "men of our rank"; and in a later letter the agent is instructed to tell him the consequences of giving only verbal promises "to one of our rank, showing that he does not esteem us more than a vile plebeian, since he has lied to us so often," and so forth.[1] The cause of offence here alluded to was that Raphael had undertaken to complete a set of pictures for the Duke's own room in the palace. The excuse for the delay was that he was engaged on his *Transfiguration*. In the end the agent forced his way into the painter's house, and obtained a renewal of the promise. Raphael died a few weeks later, when Alfonso not only expressed no regret, but insisted on getting back some fifty ducats paid in advance.[2] Ariosto, on the other hand, wrote a fine appreciation in a Latin epitaph,—a melancholy exchange of services, for Raphael had about a year before himself painted the scene for a presentation of his friend's *Supposes* at the Papal Court. Alfonso used similar rude bluster to Titian, who painted him and his beautiful mistress Laura; but it is pleasing to know that with Michael Angelo the

[1] Gardner's *Ariosto*, p. 361. [2] *Ibid.* p. 362.

courtesy and the flattery were provided by the Duke, and the brusqueness and the final rupture by the artist.

Of the moral character of Alfonso accounts vary. On the one side he seems to have been devoted to his good Duchess, Lucrezia Borgia, and he wrote on her death an affecting letter, full of natural feeling.[1] His Court also is said by one witness to have been as different from that of Ippolito as night from day. "The Cardinal's was all rioting noise and feasting, whilst Alphonso affected a certain austerity of deportment. . . . Nor did he neglect or scorn literature. In the evening, besides chess and cards, there would be music and the reading of romances. Much appreciated were the poetry of Boiardo and the first sketch of the *Orlando Furioso*. Ariosto was frequently called on to read to the Duke." It should be noted that this favourable evidence of the manners of the Duke and of his Court are derived from the work of Agostino Mosti,[2] who was then a boy of thirteen in the service of Lucrezia Borgia. This Mosti is severely censured by Panizzi, because he was for years "the cruel, ungenerous, and unmanly jailer of Torquato Tasso," and because he tried to gratify his own vanity by raising a monument to Ariosto and coupling his own name with the poet's in the inscription. Other evidences are not so favourable to the character of the Duke. There are stories told of him of secret orgies and even of occasional public outbreaks of disorder.[3] Apart from

[1] See above, p. 14. [2] Gardner, *op. cit.* p. 27.
[3] Cappelli, *op. cit.* cxxx.

his cruelty to his brothers on the occasion of the conspiracy,[1] one of the most striking tragedies of the Renaissance is laid to his charge. There seems to be no doubt that the murder of Ercole Strozzi (1508) was instigated by Alfonso; the only controversy has been in respect of his motives.

A short account of this tragedy may serve to throw light on the conditions that prevailed in Ferrara in the time of Ariosto.

Ercole Strozzi was of the same age as his devoted friend Lodovico Ariosto, and, in his youth, of the same tastes in the study of Latin and the pursuit of diverse loves. His father, like Ariosto's, had been Judge of the twelve Sages, and had gained the same popular hatred as chief tax-gatherer. The son had succeeded his father in office and in popular disfavour, but—apart from his odious office—he was considered "the most gentle, the most magnificent, and most amiable cavalier of Ferrara."[2] After the coming of Lucrezia Borgia he wrote many Latin verses in her honour—Lucrezia knew Latin—including a poem on the death of her brother Cesare,[3] and his praise of Cesare may be likened to Ariosto's praise of Ippolito. But the courtly devotion to Lucrezia expressed in Latin verse was soon driven out by a real passion for Barbara Torella, who knew no Latin, and by her influence and example converted Ercole into an Italian poet. He married the lady, and thirteen days after he was found dead in the street, wrapped in his mantle, with the throat

[1] See above, p. 47. [2] Carducci, p. 234. [3] *Ibid.* p. 183.

cut, the body stabbed in more than twenty places, and locks of his hair, which he wore very long, torn from his head and scattered on the ground. Alfonso, who always professed to be a lover of justice, took no measures to find out the murderers; none dared to make inquiry or insinuations when the Duke was silent, though the widow wrote a sonnet which is considered by Carducci one of the finest in Italian,[1] and is certainly the outcome of the deepest sorrow. The motives which led Alfonso to so savage a crime have been variously estimated. That he was jealous of Ercole Strozzi's devotion to Lucrezia seems impossible, because a few years later Ercole's verses[2] in her honour were published, and in any case the Duke's jealousy was not likely to wait until the affections of his supposed rival had been transferred. The theory generally held is that the Duke was himself a rejected lover of the Torella, and that he took a barbarous revenge on her by the murder of her husband. This is clearly the opinion of Carducci.[3]

Whatever may have been the merits of Alfonso as a patron of art, or his demerits as a lover of

[1] *Op. cit.* p. 238.

[2] See above, p. 57 *n.*

[3] *Op. cit.* p. 239. A more recent theory is that advanced by Mr. Gardner. On this view Ercole was engaged in political intrigues against the Duke and was giving information to his enemies (*op. cit.* pp. 53, 54). The brutal treatment of the victim seems to accord better with personal hatred than with suspicion of political treason; and the motive seems rather of the kind that led Ippolito to have Giulio blinded than of the kind which led Alfonso to imprison for life his unhappy brothers. The knowledge of this crime and its probable cause must have been one of the many reasons which made Ariosto unwilling, except under necessity, to enter the ducal service, after his dismissal by Ippolito. The first husband of Alessandra Benucci was Tito Strozzi, a brother of Ercole, and as his letters show, Ariosto after his union with Alessandra was in intimate relations with the Strozzi.

disorderly pleasures, his ruling passion was for mechanical construction, especially cannon. He made his artillery with such success that on at least two celebrated occasions he won important battles. He gave his guns names (one of the best was called Diavolo), and he loved them like a father. He wrote to Ippolito that each could be fired as many as thirty or even forty times in one day. At near range the effect was certainly devastating, as for example when the Venetian Fleet had ascended the Po and was threatening Ferrara. Under Ippolito's command embrasures were cut in the embankments and Alfonso's cannon were secretly brought to bear on the level of the water. As the Venetian galleys passed, not one of them escaped. Ariosto's condemnation of artillery as destructive of chivalry[1] was no doubt founded on Alfonso's practice. On one occasion he ordered his men to go on firing though his allies were inextricably mingled with his enemies.

The wars of Alfonso do not call for notice in this place except in so far as they bear on the life of Ariosto. And indirectly the consequences were most serious. The Duke was so much impoverished by his military expenses and loss of revenues that he could no longer pay the salaries of his gentlemen. Besides the loss of his pay, Ariosto was unable, through the war, to get from Milan the fees of his benefice. To add to his misfortunes at this time he just missed becoming a wealthy man, or at any rate

[1] *Furioso*, Canto IX. st. 90-91.

being freed from family cares, by the death of a childless rich uncle. The estate was claimed by a convent of Friars and also by the Duke's treasurer (who had a personal grudge against Ariosto), so that instead of obtaining a fortune the poet was encumbered with a burdensome law-suit. The law's delay extended beyond the poet's lifetime, and eventually the suit was abandoned both by the Friars and by the Ariosto family.

Ariosto was forced to warn the Duke that unless he could receive enough for his needs he must seek service in some other Court.

It was in these circumstances that he was made Governor of the province of Garfagnana, a rough district in the Apennines, inhabited by bandits and others, whose political allegiance was as mutable as their morals. Different parts of the province had been subject at different times to Ferrara, Lucca, Florence, and the Pope ; and on the death of Leo X., just in time to save Alfonso from destruction [1] (he was extremely lucky in the deaths of Popes), the mountaineers of the old Ferrarese part pulled down the Papal flag and raised the banner of the Estensi. They then requested Alfonso to send them a governor, and the choice of the Duke fell on Ariosto. The poet with his usual modesty [2] explains that the Duke was pressed for time and could not search for a better man, and that perhaps he had more regard for the

[1] But for the death of Pope Leo Ferrara would probably have succumbed to his attack, just as it would have fallen to Pope Giulio, Leo's predecessor, but for his death.

[2] Satire IV. v. 193 *sq.*

needs of his gentleman than for the needs of his subjects. He confesses his obligation to the Duke, though the gift, great as it was, was not conformable to his own wishes. The needs of the poet compelled him to accept, though he seems to have dreaded the prospect almost as much as the proposed transfer to Hungary in the train of the Cardinal. Curiously enough it is this part of the life of Ariosto which is best known from his own letters and satires, and from other sources. He held the office for a little over three years (February 1522–June 1525). His first care by way of preparation was to make his will in which everything was left to his legitimated son Virginio, and, failing him, Ariosto's brothers. That no mention is made of Alessandra (as was the case in a later will) has been used to show that Ariosto could not have married her by this date. The more probable explanation is that the marriage was kept secret. There is no doubt that the principal of the many hardships imposed on him by his residence in the Garfagnana was his enforced absence from Alessandra. One of his finest poems[1] is descriptive of his journey and his melancholy reflections.

He blames himself for leaving Alessandra. He ought to have turned a deaf ear to the request of his master and obeyed his own desire to stay with his lady. He is fittingly punished for his grave error. The storm of wind and rain beats in his face; the road is scarce passable with mud; the horse, fright-

[1] Capitolo III., Campori, p. 77. Campori argues that the poem probably refers to a later journey, but the sentiments are certainly appropriate to the first.

ened by the lightning and worn out by the journey, will not answer to whip or spur ; no house or shelter is possible before the arrival at his new home ; and then the tempest in his heart will be fiercer than the wintry storm. His bed will seem harder than a rock ; and time which was wont to fly quicker than an arrow when he rejoiced in the sweet looks, the unconquered beauty, the immortal worth and lovely form of his lady, will henceforth for the rest of his life drag along so that months and days and hours will seem to be long years in affliction.

A tradition of this journey,[1] which was taken for granted by Byron, has been dissipated by modern criticism, but was certainly well found. It was told that Ariosto suddenly came on a group of bandits, and when one of them began to follow him he was rather concerned for the outcome. But the tale goes that the chief of the outlaws asked a servant of Ariosto who he was, and on hearing that he was the author of the *Furioso* he made after him to give his excuses for not saluting him with proper honour.

But however much the office was distasteful to the poet, there is no doubt, from the evidence of his letters and other documents, that he did his duty to his subjects and to his master not only with the highest standard of honour, but with extraordinary tact and ability. Alfonso was fond of posing as a just ruler, and he expected detailed reports from his officials. But it is clear from Ariosto's letters that the standard set up by the poet was too high for the

[1] Baruffaldi, *op. cit.* 187 ; Campori, *op. cit.* p. 78.

master, and letter follows letter with complaints that the law is not respected, and especially that safe-conducts are obtained from Ferrara itself by criminals who ought to be in prison. Some of the worst of the offenders are the priests, and those sheltered by the privileges of the Church. The situation of the province on the borders of several foreign jurisdictions made it easy for the criminal to cross the border and escape justice. In spite of his good nature Ariosto seems to have been a stern judge—his appointment was both judicial and executive—and in consequence it was hardly safe for him to go beyond the protection of the fortress of Castelnuovo. He had two consolations—one continuous, the company of his son Virginio; the other an occasional visit to Ferrara and Alessandra. Had it not been for these infrequent returns to civilisation, he tells us he could not have survived the ordeal. In one of his last letters to the Duke he makes the complaint that his son Virginio has been subjected to a grave assault, and even in this case he lays most stress on the injury to the ducal authority by such an insult to his commissary. To this complaint the Duke for once sends a fitting answer.

By his Italian biographers Ariosto's conduct of his governorship in the Garfagnana has always been highly commended. Campori, for example, concludes his too brief notices of Ariosto's life with a quotation from a letter of the poet, "So long as I am in this office I shall have no friend but justice"; which, he says, does as much honour to his memory as the most

splendid octave in the *Orlando*. Until recently, however, the opinion of English critics has been inadequate or unjust. They seem to think that a poet of the highest imagination must *ipso facto* be incapable as a magistrate or governor. They forget that the real business in life of Ariosto was the conduct of important political affairs. Sir Walter Scott was none the worse a sheriff because he was the Ariosto of the North. Ariosto, though the most good-natured of men, always aimed at justice. His task was of the hardest. He tells us that if the law were put in force, which ordains that the house of a bandit or of any one who gives shelter to a bandit should be burned, there would not be a house left in the province. He says, not altogether in jest, that the only way to suppress the outlaws was to burn all the churches, so great was the protection of the ecclesiastical laws and customs. But through all his difficulties he examines every case with care. Most of his letters are about poor people, for whom he is trying to find a remedy for some grievance. In his heart he had always a warm feeling for his subjects, however rebellious. He writes of them as "my bandits," just as he wrote of "my Latins" under happier conditions.

Ariosto was at last relieved of his thankless and arduous duty. The success of his government is shown by the failure of his successor, who had boasted that in six months he would restore order by a firm hand. He tried the prevailing mode of severe punishment, tempered by bribery and extortion,

and in less than two years was obliged to flee the country.

For the last eight years of his life (1525–1533), after his return to Ferrara from the Garfagnana, Ariosto was permitted to reap some of the rewards of his fame, and of his unselfish loyalty and family affection. The last of the confidential missions which he undertook for the Duke of Ferrara (October 1531) was on an errand of mercy for the people of Modena, who were suffering under the soldiery of the Marquis del Vasto. The mission succeeded, and the poet was found so attractive personally and in his recitations, that he was rewarded by the Marquis with a pension for life, as well as with the personal gift of a lapis lazuli, set in gold, with a gold chain and crucifix. One other journey, the last of his life, was not so fortunate. He accompanied Duke Alfonso to Venice, although at the time hardly recovered from a fever. Ariosto detested the sea, and was a bad sailor. The Duke invited his poet and his physician (also a hater of salt-water except as medicine) to a pleasure excursion on the lagoons. A storm arose and the doctor and the poet were drenched. Even to the last it seemed the fortune of Ariosto to suffer discomforts in mind and body, and to injure his health in the service of his princely masters.

CHAPTER V

DEATH AND CHARACTER

THE last years of Ariosto's life were the happiest and most in accord with his likings of things and people. He built and rebuilt for himself a little cottage set in a garden. In both, as we are told by his beloved son Virginio, who lived with him, he took the greatest delight. He altered the rooms and the furnishings of his dwelling as if he were playing with a doll's house. He dug up the seeds in his garden to see how they were growing. Once, indeed, he gave nature a chance and left the seeds undisturbed. He had sown capers, and every day with a watchful eye and self-denying hand he marked the growth of the young shoots, only to find that the real seeds had never come up at all. He had been admiring the progress of the shoots of some elder bushes, the parent plants having been imperfectly improved off the face of his garden long before. The story is the more probable, as his garden had been for the most part taken in from uncultivated land.

On the house he set up a Latin inscription in two

lines, of which Panizzi prints in large type the significant words, "Bought with my own money."[1]

Ariosto had spent the hardest part of a hard life in the business of the Court of Ferrara and the service of his masters of the House of Este—in arduous and perilous journeys, frequent diplomatic missions, occasional soldiering, the rule of a province infested with outlaws, and other employments in courts and camps which needed a wary alertness of mind. And yet he was by nature a born dreamer. In the art that he most loved he was sometimes so absorbed that he saw into the invisible world of his fancy, to the neglect of the visible real world. Once he set out for a walk (he was a great walker—an unusual accomplishment in those days) and walked from Carpi to Ferrara before he noticed the passing landscapes. He was accustomed to rise at any hour of the night to write down his ideas or turn his verses; and yet he told his son that by his bad memory he had lost many an epigram or stroke of fancy. In the matter of meat and drink he was a lover of the simple life. He hated banquets; he ought to have been born, he tells us, in the times when men lived on acorns; his favourite dish was a mess of turnips mixed with vinegar and mustard prepared by himself; strong wine he could not drink; his usual habit was one meal a day, which he

[1] Panizzi, *op. cit.* p. lii:

Parva, sed apta mihi, sed nulli obnoxia, sed non
Sordida, *parta MEO sed tamen AERE domus.*

The "*meo aere*" was meant to tell to all men that the house was not the gift of a patron.

ate as fast as he could to get it finished. He was inattentive in his feeding; it is told that he once ate up what had been placed for an unexpected guest. One of the minor defects of Ariosto (alluded to in Hudibras) as compared with Homer or Virgil, Scott or Dumas, is the way he neglects to provide his heroes and heroines with a proper allowance of meals. His creatures, like their creator, were always too intent on other things. It is noteworthy, however, that Ariosto does not forget the horses to the same extent.

On the other hand, the poet's love of gardens, fine buildings, music, painting, sculpture, and pageantry makes him surpassed by none in these accessories of romance. He was intimately associated with the best painters of his day: notably Dosso Dossi and Raphael.

Ariosto's life in these last years at Ferrara was not all of the simple kind. He wrote new comedies and rewrote the old ones for fresh presentation. Under his designs Duke Alfonso had a great hall in the palace converted into a theatre. The permanent scene (in those days in the comedies there was only one scene) was magnificently painted by Dosso Dossi and his pupils, all under the eye of the poet.

Ariosto, though a dreamer at times, was never a recluse. He had a multitude of friends all over Italy, and when his ship came home, after his long voyage in the seas of fancy, he was welcomed by a host of men and women, the best of the times: are they not all set down, except Machiavelli, in the

opening stanzas of the last canto of the *Furioso*? If the praises in some instances were too generous, so also was the voyager's own unselfish nature; like one of his modern admirers he was a bad hater.

Except perhaps in his youth Ariosto was not a great reader or student, though he is said to have devoured a multitude of French and Spanish romances. In the *Orlando* the narrative always flows so easily, the words are so "inevitable," the verses are so simple and musical, that at first reading, and even after many readings, the poetry, like Garrick's acting, seems too natural, as if rapidly and carelessly improvised by a born story-teller. Yet in truth Ariosto revised and revised, and was for ever revising the *Furioso*, and was never satisfied. He asked the opinions of his most critical friends,[1] and doubtless, like Molière, the opinions of the less critical, as for example Alessandra. But instead of improving the life out of his poetry he only made the words more and more fitted for the endless varieties of his fancy. For the last edition he interpolated six new cantos, and instead of spoiling the proportions he made the original more symmetrical and set the old characters on the quest of fresh adventures in new scenes with unexpected revelations of their qualities. We know that even the first edition was a work of infinite pains; all his life the poet showed a patience that refused no labour,[2] and the first manuscript was so amended and rearranged, so written over with glosses

[1] Panizzi, *op. cit.* p. cliii, *n.*

[2] Barotti, p. 19.

and erasures, that Ariosto said it was impossible for any one but himself to read it.[1]

There is good evidence that Ariosto had intended to make further changes in the last edition, not by way of addition but of suppression : there were some things which before dying he wished to blot.[2] But death, though the approach was gradual, was too speedy for the fulfilment of this good intention. On the last night of 1532 a great fire broke out in Ferrara. In spite of every effort to subdue it, it lasted three days and caught the shops under the grand hall, which had been made into the theatre of which Ariosto was the designer and director. His health had been failing for some time, and though he lingered for some six months, the destruction of his beautiful theatre and Dosso Dossi's scenery gave him a shock from which he never recovered. He died in the night of July 6, 1533.

It was in accord with the beliefs of the time to suppose that the fire presaged his death. This belief apparently was shared in by Harrington. "Now if fire (as one Artimedorus writeth) betokeneth fame and greatness, then this unfortunate fire, fortuning at such a time as it did, may yet serve as a means to ennoble the more this famous man's death, and as Comets are said to foreshew the death of Princes, so this terrible fire, lasting so many days as it did, might be thought to foretell his death, chiefly since it con-

[1] Letter to the Marchese di Mantova : Cappelli, *op. cit.* Letter X.

[2] See Panizzi, *op. cit.* p. clix : "Consequently we are bound to believe that Ariosto intended to take all the objectionable passages from his poem, and had already made some alterations specifically pointed out by Ruscelli."

sumed that great worke that was built for his great fame and honour."[1] According to his own wishes and direction Ariosto was buried in the simplest possible manner. From his little house in the street called Mirasole he was carried, in the dead of night, by four men, with two candles, to the old church of San Benedetto, accompanied, however, by the monks of their own accord, contrary to their custom; and as he had wished and prescribed, he was buried very simply.[2]

His son Virginio wished to have the remains removed to a chapel which he had built in the garden that Ariosto loved, but the monks would not permit it; yet, as Panizzi says, his ashes were often disturbed to enrich some handsome monument erected to his memory by individuals. The record of these sepulchral honours and of the motives of the individuals concerned (Mosti and others) may be passed by; Ariosto is too lovable a man to be so quarrelled over. The controversy that arose and has lasted to our own times on the religion of the poet may also be put aside. The conduct of the monks showed that this outward conformity to religion was at least sufficient, and the will which he made on the eve of his departure to the Garfagnana begins with the commendation of his soul to God, and the hope that he may find a place amongst the blessed.[3]

In the older lives which Harrington summarised

[1] Harrington, *op. cit.* p. 422.

[2] Barotti, p. 16 and note 40 in Appendix.

[3] The will in Latin is quoted in full by Baruffaldi, Doc. XV. p. 284.

it was written: "He tooke his sicknesse not only patiently but cheerfully, affirming that he was willing to die, and so much the rather because he heard that the greatest divines were of opinion that after this life we should know one another, affirming to his friends that were by that many his friends were departed whom he had a very great desire to visit, and that every hour seemed to him a year till he might see them." Ariosto, in the matter of religion, was largely tolerant; and he ascribed the heresy of Friar Martin and others to the subtle study of the metaphysics of theology, "because when the intellect soars up to see God it is no wonder if sometimes it falls down blind and confused."[1]

A detailed description of the personal appearance of Ariosto based on contemporary evidence has been Englished by Harrington.[2] "He was tall of person, of complexion melancholy, he was of colour like an olive, somewhat tawnie in the face, but fair-skinned otherwise, his hair was blacke, but he quickly grew bald, his forehead was large, his eye-brows thinne, his eye a little hollow but very full of life and very blacke, his nose was large and hooked, as they say the kings of Persia were, his teeth passing even and white, his cheeks but leane, his beard very thinne, his necke well proportioned, his shoulders square and well made, but somewhat stooping, as almost all that looke much on bookes in their youth are inclined to be, his hand somewhat drie, and a little bow-legged. His counterfeit was taken by Titiano, that excellent

[1] Satire VI. v. 43 *sq.*

[2] *Op. cit.* p. 421.

drawer so well to the life, that a man would think it were yet alive."[1] This picture by Titian was called by Byron "the portrait of poetry and the poetry of portraits." Besides the painting, Titian designed the woodcut that was prefixed to the edition of 1532 of the *Orlando*, and has been generally repeated in subsequent editions. The portrait ascribed to Dosso Dossi[2] is evidently of Ariosto in the prime of life. Baruffaldi, after giving an account of the various portraits of Ariosto, says that of no poet have the copies of his likeness been so multiplied. Four medals were also struck in his honour.

Full accounts have also come down from contemporary observers of Ariosto's personal character. His brother Gabriele, in the Latin poem written on his death,[3] may perhaps be suspected of exaggerating the good qualities of the man he adored, but his account is confirmed by other writers. He is praised for his pleasant affability, his sincerity and loyalty, his readiness in seeking favours for his friends, his modesty on his own claims, his kindness and love of justice. He had become prudent and sagacious by his life in Courts and his knowledge of the world and different sorts of people; he was alert and ready in conversation, but naturally a man of few words, inclined to solitude and a life of contemplation; most devoted to his country, most loyal to his princes, and most constant in his friendships.[4] Better than any

[1] The original from Pigna is quoted by Baruffaldi, *op. cit.* p, 256.

[2] Reproduced in my volume of *Tales from Ariosto.*

[3] Panizzi, Appendix I. to the *Life.*

[4] Barotti, p. xx.

summary is the revelation of the man himself in his own letters and poetry, in the preludes to the cantos of the *Orlando*, as well as in the satires and the minor poems. Just as the more often the *Orlando* is read so much greater seems the charm, so with the life of the poet the more we read the frank utterances, and the more we realise the unselfish and many-sided life of the man, so much the more do we admire his personality.

"And now," as Harrington says, "to close up this whole discourse of his life with the greatest praise he was a most charitable and honest man . . . his learning, his good behaviour, his honesty made him both beloved of all good men in his life and bewailed of all honest men in his death, for as methinks reading over his life I could find in my heart to wish (saving for some very few things) to live and to die in the same way :

Sic mihi contingat vivere sicque mori."

And if the reader of Ariosto should think some part may do him harm, if at such part he will not turn the leaf, as the poet advises, then, again, to quote Harrington, "the best physicke I can prescribe you is to take a leafe or two of *S. Matthew's* Gospell or *S. Paul's* Epistles, and it shal restore you to your perfect health."

But if the reader is too modern to listen to the little sermon of the Elizabethan let him hear a story told by the greatest poet of modern Italy. It begins with a quotation from one of the fragmentary

notes intended by Virginio Ariosto to be expanded into a life of his father. "He was never satisfied with his verses, and changed and rechanged them; and for this reason not a verse would stick in his mind. And of the things he lost in this way none grieved him so much as an epigram he made for a marble column, which was broken whilst being brought to Ferrara. This was that column the companion to . . . " and here Virginio stopped short, and three centuries later Carducci[1] takes up the tale: "The two columns were meant to support an equestrian statue of Ercole the first. But in the transportation one of them was broken and fell into the river and for this Ariosto wrote his epigram; the other was left and lay for many years unused in the piazza now called after Ariosto until in 1659 it was raised up and a statue of Pope Alexander VII. put on it. In 1796 the republicans of the Cispadana threw down the statue of the Pope, and in its stead, in the presence of General Napoleon Bonaparte, put up a statue of Liberty in plaster. In 1799 the Austrians pulled down the plaster statue of Liberty, and for their part put none in its place. But in 1810 these *ci-devant* republicans of the Cispadana put on the column a marble statue of the Emperor Napoleon, who as a republican general and a founder of republics, had already been present at the elevation of the plaster statue of Liberty; but he too stayed on the pillar only a short time, and was debased in 1814. From 1833 onwards, upon the column which

[1] *Op. cit.* p. 246.

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Ariosto saw brought to Ferrara to support the statue of the Estensian Duke, in whose reign the poet was born, upon this column, which in turn had supported a Pope, a Republic, and an Emperor, there now stands the effigy of Ariosto, sculptured by Francesco Vidoni. And neither Popes nor Emperors nor Liberty itself shall pull you down, divine poet, who wrote the *Orlando* and delighted your heart in watching the elder shoots which you fancied were the capers you had sown."

CHAPTER VI

THE GENIUS OF ARIOSTO

When Ariosto was Governor of Garfagnana and shut up in Castelnuovo in the Apennines, he felt as if he were physically in prison. He never found the spirit of liberty in mountains ; like an ancient Roman he looked on them as horrid and savage and desolate. He was crushed by the weight of the hills, and cramped by the narrow outlook of the valleys. He was a lover of the plains, and like an old astrologer he needed for his art a large sky and wide horizon where earth and heaven seem to shade into one another. The first characteristic of the genius of Ariosto is its breadth. The extent of his range is seen by the simplest measurements in time and space.

In time the *Orlando Furioso* goes back to the siege of Troy and the origins of the Latin race. It is an essential part of the scheme of the poem that Charlemagne and Rogero should be Trojan by descent. The arms of Hector are necessary for the final overthrow of the Saracens. Ariosto reverts to the mythology of the Greeks and to the theology of the Hebrews for ideas and for characters. He

recalls to life the harpies and the nymphs; Saint John drives the fiery chariot of Elias, and the starting point of the journey is the earthly paradise of Adam and Eve. Ariosto brings down the history of Italy and Christendom to his own times and projects it into the future. He records the discovery of America, and of the sea route to India, and he foretells the birth of a new world-empire greater than that dreamed of by Dante. The far-off past and the dim future are both made one with the present, as if time itself were a form of living thought, and not the matrix of dead fossils.

In the same way the range in space is of enormous extent. The scene shifts from India to Ireland, and from Iceland to Central Africa. When Astolpho has the good fortune to get in his possession the flying horse, his first thought is to make a survey of all the earth, apparently for the mere love of discovery, though the journey in the air from France to Aethiopia is a necessary part of the story, and is not a geographical interlude. In the great contest between Christian and Saracens both sides draw levies from the most distant countries. Rinaldo is sent to Scotland to summon help for Charlemagne; and in aid of Agramant, the leader of the Saracens, Mandricardo comes from Tartary, and Gradasso from Sericane beyond India. All the great characters are wanderers, and we are always made to feel that the stage is the world; a world that includes heaven and hell as well as earth. Angelica in the opening of the poem has just arrived from Cathay, and the

last we see of her is taking ship from Spain to go back to her own kingdom. The island of Alcina, where Rogero is enamoured of the enchantress, is in the far East; the island of sorrows where Angelica is rescued by Rogero from the sea-monster is on the west of Ireland.

Both the history and the geography are handled with the lightest touch of romance. The journeys are made with incredible rapidity; if the reader begins to think whether they are physically possible they seem as incredible as Dante's descent into hell. But the very rapidity secures the realism; the eye is taken from one place to another and the picture is formed before there is time to think. In the picture-house of Ariosto we look at the pictures and never think how the moving is done. As with the geography so with the history; we never pause to consider how the prophecies of Merlin could have been made, and, if made, how they could have been delivered to Ariosto in Ferrara. The beauty of the history of Ariosto is that one can never tell how the true and the false are mingled—all we know is that the history makes the romance real, and the romance makes the history alive.

The breadth of the genius of Ariosto is also shown by the diversity of the characters and of the incidents, and by the complexity and the texture of the plot. Out of Shakespeare there is no such diversity of womankind to be found, and Shakespeare wrote thirty-seven plays, whilst Ariosto joined his forty-six cantos into one continuous poem. The women of

Ariosto range from licence and murder to perfect chastity and self-sacrifice. Angelica, "the fairest of her sex," and sought after by the prowest knights, both paynim and Christian, passes on unscathed till she marries her peasant lover. Fiordespina is as shameless as Venus. Gabrina is a murderess of two husbands. Flordelis dies of grief for the loss of her Brandimarte. Origille is a harlot. Isabella, a girl of fifteen, is as pure and passionate as Juliet, and her love is too great for any ending but tragedy. Marfisa is the incarnation of the woman militant. Doralis almost faints at the sight of a bloody lance, and in an hour is in love with its bearer, the warrior who has slaughtered her escort. No one ever dreamed of making love to Marfisa; but Bradamant was a perfect lover as well as a perfect knight; and the love of Bradamant and Rogero, which began on a battlefield, is the centre of the whole poem. Similar diversity of characterisation is shown in the men; perhaps there is no greater contrast in literature than between Orlando sane and Orlando mad. Rodomont is only partly the sayer of "rodomontades"; he is besides as proud, and as scornful of God, as Satan; yet loyal of the loyal to his suzerain; a lover of women, and yet in his mouth are put the most bitter curses ever uttered against woman; fearless and cruel, he slays and burns like a destroying angel, and yet on occasion he curbs the anger of others, and shows the true courtesy of chivalry.

More wonderful than the diversity of character is the weaving of the main plot and the subordinate

by-plots and incidents. The *Orlando Furioso* is so complex in construction that the full effect can only be realised after intimate familiarity has been attained with the characters and episodes. On a first perusal the reader is bewildered by the wonderful interlacing of the different stories and the sudden intervention of new characters. In no other writer are the transitions so abrupt and the intervals of suspended interest so prolonged. The *Orlando* seems at first sight a conglomeration of stories of all kinds, from the broadest humour to the most delicate and ideal romance. But closer familiarity shows that the stories are not held together, as in the *Arabian Nights* or in most of the mediaeval romances, by a connective tissue that is purely formal. The main plot of Ariosto is developed in telling the stories, and the more we read the more we are astonished at his constructive art. A story is left at the most interesting point and is not taken up again until other incomplete stories have been interwoven with the main plot. There is no preliminary description of the characters or of the scene of action. This is no doubt partly due to the fact that, throughout, Ariosto takes it for granted that his readers are familiar with Boiardo and with the chief characters of romance or history. The *Furioso* is a continuation of the *Innamorato*. But the modern reader who does not start with this previous knowledge is at first bewildered. It seems as if Ariosto had woven together a mass of stories in a kind of patchwork, and that the only interest in the way of plot was in the disentanglement of the puzzle

and the postponement of the solution. It is as if Shakespeare had put into one great play his thirty-seven tragedies and histories and comedies and interspersed the scenes at random. It is only after repeated readings that the method in the madness of Ariosto is seen and appreciated. The difficulty in reading is increased by the fact that the stories are in themselves so vivid and interesting that the main plot is lost sight of or forgotten; just as in a great battle the main strategy is lost in the particular incidents. The complexity of the whole poem and also the interest of the particular stories may be shown by a simple typographical fact. It has been the practice of successive editors to give footnotes with references for the continuation of the story in hand. By the aid of these guide-posts the reader may finish one story at a time, but he will not see the full bearing until the intervening stories have been read, and very often he will find that he is drawn off on another trail. Once the true perspective has been realised this intermingling of stories has a peculiar fascination, and, as Charles Fox is reported to have said, there is not an incident out of harmony or superfluous. And certainly the intermingling is one of the reasons why the interest grows with the familiarity. The saying of Bernardo Tasso has often been verified, that no writer is re-read so many times as Ariosto. Walter Scott used to read him (and Boiardo) at least once a year all his life.

The breadth and the diversity of the genius of Ariosto are also shown by the style which is the

despair of the translator and the despair of the critic who seeks to describe it in some accepted formula.

Much has been written by Italian critics on the correctness or purity of Ariosto's style from the linguistic point of view. Suffice it to say that in the final edition the Lombardisms are so few and the Tuscan is so correct, according to the commentators, that some have made the supposition that Ariosto must have stayed a long time in Florence simply to perfect himself in the Tuscan style, and others have supposed that the influence of Alessandra was the effective force in the development. The better opinion, however, seems to be that Ariosto never stayed for any length of time in Florence, and the letters that survive written by Alessandra do not reveal any nicety of linguistic appreciation.[1]

It is now agreed, however, that Ariosto enriched the Italian language in several distinct ways. He adapted some words directly from the Latin, he adapted others from dialect, and he gave new and enduring life to words that had gone out of use. He seems to have taken a special pleasure, says a recent editor,[2] in this kind of exhumation, and deserves for it special commendation. Just as Ariosto had a "prodigious aptitude" for gathering materials for his imagination from all sorts of sources, so he had a similar capacity for the acquisition of language. "His special genius, guided by the finest taste and calling up at need all these varied memories of the spoken and written word, created a language fresh

[1] Baruffaldi, p. 155. [2] Papini, p. xiv.

and spontaneous, a style absolutely new and individual, which can only be resolved into its original elements by the most minute study."

When we pass from the purely linguistic to the more general characteristics of Ariosto's style, we are struck by its simplicity and clarity and apparent ease. We should suppose the ease was the readiness of the improvisatore if we did not know (from sure evidence)[1] that by no writer had the file been more industriously applied. Probably it never occurred to any one to compare Ariosto to Wordsworth, and yet in style there are striking resemblances. There are stanzas in Ariosto which might be fitly translated into the very simplest Wordsworthian, and there are stanzas that equal in dignity the finest of Wordsworth's sonnets. Like Wordsworth, Ariosto on occasion uses the most familiar images and comparisons. The reader who is expecting something epic or romantic is startled by the introduction of the most common humanities expressed in the most common of language. In this respect Ariosto may plead the example of Dante himself, and in some of the most common of the images there is direct imitation of Dante, as in the green stick burning and sputtering in the fire, or the liquor gurgling from the overturned cask.[2] To such simplicity Tasso never condescends, and perhaps this is one of the many

[1] See Papini, p. vi.

[2] This simile is derived from Pliny. In his comment Panizzi says that the last line of the stanza (Canto XXIII. st. 113) "Ch' a goccia a goccia fuore esce a fatica" is as fine a specimen of imitative harmony as can be found in the writings of any age or country.

reasons why the old controversy on the relative greatness of the two poets has been decided altogether in favour of Ariosto.

The footnotes of Hoole are sprinkled with apologies and lamentations, not for the poverty of his own translation but for the extravagances in the style of his original, which refused to be put into any imitation of Pope's *Homer*. In truth, the style of Ariosto is as varied as that of Chaucer or Shakespeare. The heroic not only verges on but passes into the mock-heroic, and there is no gradual modulation. Ariosto delights in abrupt transitions, not merely from grave to gay but from tragedy to grotesque extravagance. And between the extremes there are variations of all kinds. This diversity of style, which is as variable as the subject-matter, accounts for the very different labels that have been appended to his work by distracted critics in search of brevity. Some have been so much impressed by the "irony" of Ariosto that they have discovered in the *Orlando* a more subtle Don Quixote. They have supposed his main intention was to ridicule and vulgarise mediaeval chivalry. They seem to think that the appearance of tragedy is only introduced to heighten the effect of the comedy. A book that once had a reputation was entitled *Funny Deaths*, and from the point of view of the supporters of the irony of Ariosto his deaths are presumably to be regarded as funny. But to say that the deaths of Zerbino, of Brandimarte, of Rodomont—to take the names that first occur—are put in to ridicule chivalry, or raise

a laugh at the expense of the reader, is only possible to a laughing philosopher who has lost all sense of sympathy. It is true that Ariosto indulges in violent contrasts, and that tragedy and comedy appear on the same scene at the same time. But the comedy cannot destroy the tragedy, just as the grave-diggers in *Hamlet* do not make the play a comedy, and the prince of Denmark is not only a jester and a sayer of ironies.

In forming a true judgment on the irony of Ariosto regard must be paid to the development of mediaeval romance, of which the *Orlando Furioso* was the climax. In the romantic tales which were sung or recited by the wandering minstrels (*giularre*, *jujar*) there was always an element of extravagant burlesque. In process of time this element became more and more dominant with the degradation of sentiment into coarse animalism. The humour or irony of the romantic narrative poems of Italy is derived from the tradition of the vagabond story-tellers, who were obliged to please and amuse their audiences. In the same way the invocation and the farewell address to the audience in every canto, which are generally of a religious or moral turn, are due to the fact that the ballads and stories were approved by the clergy with the pious fiction that there was a moral in them.[1]

It is not only in the case of Ariosto that the question has been debated whether the main

[1] Panizzi, *Romantic Poetry of the Italians*, p. 203; Carducci, *Cavalleria umanesimo*, *passim*; Rajna, *op. cit.* p. 25.

object of the poet is to throw ridicule on mediaeval romance and chivalry. The *Morgante Maggiore* of Pulci has been written down as mock-heroic, but in his celebrated article in the *Quarterly* Foscolo said that those who considered it a mock poem did not know anything of Pulci or his age or this kind of poetry. Any reader of the second part of the *Morgante*, in which the main theme is the defeat at Roncesvalles, must see the justice of this view. The vein of irony is also rich in Boiardo, and constantly comes to the surface even in the most tragic incidents, as for example in the death of Agrican. Some writers, in order to magnify the serious side of Boiardo in comparison with Ariosto, have placed the humorous elements of the *Innamorato* too much in the background. In truth, in the mixture of comedy and tragedy the same tradition is followed by both poets. In some notable instances Ariosto is the more serious of the two, and has certainly intensified the heroic side of characters common to both poems. In the portrayal, for example, of Charlemagne, Ariosto never lets the great Roman Emperor altogether lose his dignity as does Boiardo on more than one occasion. Astolpho is also drawn on far more serious lines in the *Furioso*, and the peculiar English madness of the English Duke which was most prominent in the *Innamorato* is transformed by Ariosto into the fancy of an exalted knight-errant.

The humour of Ariosto as shown in the *Furioso* is often of the kind that does not bear translation or even paraphrase ; and this for very different reasons.

Sometimes the exaggeration seems to the modern too gross, sometimes the subtlety is too elusive, and often, strangely enough, the two kinds are found together. Of the three kinds in one there is the notable case where Rodomont meets with Isabella in the care of the hermit. They are taking the dead body of Zerbino to the convent where Isabella means to immure herself for ever with her dead. Rodomont, full of rage against God and man, and most of all against woman, is nursing his wrath in gloomy solitude. The setting is all tragedy—the whole story of Isabella and Zerbino is of the most moving.[1] The tragedy is deepened by the sudden love of Rodomont for the mourning girl, and in the midst of it all Ariosto brings in the comedy which has baffled the commentators. The hermit feels it his duty to try to convert Rodomont on the spot, and in the end the raging Saracen takes him by the neck and hurls him three miles into the sea; that (says the poet reflectively) is one report; another has it that the godly man was broken on the rocks, and yet another that he was saved in mid air by his patron saint; but in any case he vanished from the story. It is the same Rodomont who in Boiardo has threatened the old soothsayer, the king of Garaminta, that he will take him by the neck and hurl him from Africa over to Spain. But the humour or irony of Ariosto is never such as to jar upon the reader who takes it in the original setting. The exaggeration is never of the simple kind of the modern American, nor is it

[1] See my volume of *Tales from Ariosto*, VIII. IX.

mere burlesque. Rather it is the recognition of the fact that life itself is made up of contrasts. The irony of Ariosto is the irony of all the greatest of writers—philosophers, historians, poets : witness Plato, Gibbon, and Dante. In some cases the humour of Ariosto, if humour it is to be called, is more like that of Aristophanes when he gives free rein to his fancy. Astolpho's journey to the earthly paradise and his visit to the moon in the company of St. John show the fanciful irony of Ariosto at its best. But it is not capable of condensation in a summary description; it cannot be isolated like a microbe for microscopic examination. The irony of Ariosto is rather like the bouquet of a rare vintage ; and his humour is as unmeaning to the over-serious reader as the most exquisite wine to the life-long teetotaller.

Whilst some critics have misunderstood or over-emphasised the irony, others have been so much impressed with the great ideas and motives of the *Orlando* that they have labelled it an epic, and have looked on the irony and the comedy as unfortunate lapses, or as ingenious devices by which Ariosto tried to conceal his own ideal of chivalry. But this one-sided labelling is no better than the other. Ariosto is, in truth, a master of comedy and a master of epic tragedy, and on occasions he descends to burlesque and extravaganza of the wildest disorder. It is surely better to take the author in his varying moods as we find him, and not to try to persuade ourselves he is laughing at us when we feel a moving story, or that he is ignorant of the first principles of constructive

art and spoils his epic theme and grandeur by vulgarity or want of "elevation."

The variegated style of Ariosto might at first sight be supposed to be the result of pure carelessness in composition and total disregard of the combined effect of the parts of his work, and to show that he flitted from scene to scene and from style to style as the spirit moved him. But one thing at least is certain, that the variety is not the result of carelessness or ignorance or want of revision. The *Orlando* occupied him the greater part of the best part of his life, and was the subject of constant revision. If the variety is a fault, whether in form or substance, it was certainly intentional. The marvel is that the constant filing did not smooth away all the freshness. But the most notable characteristic of the *Furioso* is its irrepressible vitality. The people are all real and living, and their actions are the actions of the living. Even the magicians and the nymphs, the giants and the monsters, are all alive. The giant, for example, who, however much he is cut to pieces, comes together again like the drops of mercury, is a living creature. We can see him picking up his head and putting it on again, and we can feel the weariness of the paladins who find all their cutting and carving of him quite useless. It is all quite mad, as mad as bits of the *Tempest* or of the *Inferno*, but it is quite lively. We only wonder how the final dissolution of the giant is to be accomplished.

The vitality of the characters of Ariosto is also shown by the emotions they arouse in his most learned

and solemn commentators. They pass moral judgments on the personages of the poem just as if they were real and not imaginary beings. "I cannot admire this prince," so says Panizzi of Leo, "when I think that he murdered Ruggiero's keeper. All his good qualities are forgotten when that crime is brought to mind."

Some of the critics have been so much impressed by the morals (good and bad) of the characters, that they have tried to make the *Orlando* a series of allegories, written for the encouragement of virtue and the suppression of vice. Even Sir John Harrington appends to every canto, along with his quaint references to sources and histories, what he calls the allegory, and it is only very rarely (and with regret) that he fails to discover some moral. And no doubt there are to be extracted from the *Orlando* morals and ideals and allegories, but after all they are only such as are to be extracted from the lives of men and women. In this respect there could be no greater contrast than between Ariosto and our own Spenser. With the Italian the moral, when there is one, must be discovered by the reader himself, and the moral will vary with the reader just as the morals drawn from the book of life. With the English imitator the allegory is dominant and persistent; the characters are not persons but ideas, and ideas they remain to the end of the story.

The atmosphere of the *Orlando* cannot be described shortly. It is different from that of other great poets. There are outbursts of indignation

against the spoilers of Italy and the corrupters of Christianity that are worthy of Dante, but in general the attitude of Ariosto is one of large-minded toleration to humanity of all kinds. He is always a writer of romance; but he is real, though not realistic, even in his moralising. He is not immoral in the negative sense; he sets in movement the chords of sympathy that vibrate to the common moralities of mankind. When we read Ariosto we do not think that nothing matters, or that one kind of feeling is as good as another so long as it is feeling.

Ariosto is a great artist, perhaps the greatest of literary artists, but he has not the negative immorality that is often implied in the expression "Art for art's sake." Still less is Ariosto immoral in the ordinary positive sense. There are no doubt passages and scenes and whole stories in Ariosto, as in Chaucer and Shakespeare, which may seem too natural for our prevailing conventions, and Ariosto has been styled licentious and indelicate just as he used to be styled blasphemous. And with equal unreason. The tone of a writer must be judged not merely by the negative test of reticence, but by the vital spirit that pervades his work. And the spirit of Ariosto is the spirit of health and vigour, and is ruled by courage and truth and courtesy. As it happens, the positive morality of Ariosto lays most stress on the virtues that in our days most need emphasis. Our philanthropy is so diffuse that we are inclined to look on the mere friendship of man to man as narrow and even selfish.

Even the ties of family and blood relationship are loosened in our relaxing sentimentality for the masses. Our charity is partly done by taxation, and partly by some organisation society, and partly by fashion. The very soul of chivalry was loyalty of man to man; to lay down one's life for one's friend was the greatest of all charities and the most natural. The devotion of friendship, such as still survives in the best schoolboys and the best students, is of the kind that Ariosto idealised in his paladins. A modern critic (Rajna) finds Bradamant's respect for her mother old-fashioned and even silly. Why should a young woman who had earned a reputation second to none in battle and in venturous quests, and who had fallen passionately in love with a paragon of knighthood, ask leave of her mother to get married? "Art for art's sake" seems all at sea. We seem to have a relapse into the conventions of the schoolgirl. Why should the militant Bradamant honour her father and her mother when they were of the most commonplace unromantic type? With us the old commandment has become old-fashioned: instead of this fetish we have set up old-age pensions and insurances. Ariosto honoured father and mother alike in his life and in his poetry. Courtesy has been for so long a time a receding virtue that we have almost lost sight of it. Ariosto makes "courtesies" the burden of his song just as much as loves and deeds of daring, as is shown in the first couplet of the *Orlando*, which he is said to have written over and over again. "The casting and the

recasting of these two lines was famous in Italy in the sixteenth century": [1]

> Le donne, i cavalieri, l' arme, gli amori,
> Le cortesie, l' audaci imprese io canto.

Englished by Harrington:

> Of dames, of knights, of armes, of love's delight,
> Of courtesies, of high attempts I speake.

And the original of the lines is in Dante; "who, upbraiding with noble indignation the state of the degenerate inhabitants of Romagna, remembers with exquisite pathos":

> Le donne, i cavalieri, gli affanni e gli agi,
> Che inspiravano amore e cortesia.[2]

And the same Dante in the *Vita Nuova* concludes with a prayer to Him who is the Lord of courtesy (Colui che è sire della cortesia) that his soul might have leave to go and behold the glory of his lady. In the days of chivalry God was not only the Lord of all power and might but the Lord of courtesy.

The main story of the last two cantos of the *Orlando* is the contest in courtesy of Leo and Rogero. Even Rodomont, the awful blasphemer, on occasion will not continue a fight because he has already been conquered by the courtesy of his opponent. Closely allied to courtesy and to loyalty is the knightly word of honour. This part of the soul of chivalry still survives where it might be least expected, namely, in the most modern of modern business.

[1] Panizzi, p. cxxi, *n.*

[2] *Purgat.* xiv. 109, 110.

Gigantic trusts are carried on with no stronger sanction than is found in "gentlemen's agreements." Modern business of all kinds is impossible without reliance on the word of honour. The portrayal of good faith (in the introduction to the twenty-first canto of the *Furioso*) is one of the most often quoted of the preludes. Good faith binds the good soul more firmly than the nail fastens the board, or the hempen cord ties up the burden; the knot of good faith is so holding that it cannot be loosened; the word of honour must be kept whether passed to one or to a thousand; if it is given in the depth of the forest or in a cave far from the haunts of man it is as sure as if given before a public tribunal and a cloud of witnesses; once the promise has been made, without oath or any sign of the force of law, it must be kept. The same idea appears in the 11th Capitolo with the addition of a notable contrast: For the vile plebeian the oath is made—but between noble spirits the simple promise is an oath.[1]

Another of the moralities that go to make up the gentleman of chivalry is the scrupulous sense of fairness. Much of the guile on which Ulysses prided himself would have been unpardonable in a knight. In the heat of a mortal combat the knight who has unhorsed his adversary will himself dismount to continue the struggle; it was in this way Rinaldo lost his Baiardo in the great battle with which the *Furioso* opens. To try to wound the horse instead of the man even in real war was dastardly. Lapses

[1] *Rime* (edition Molini), p. 287.

of this sort only happen to Saracens, and even to Saracens very rarely. Orlando's cruelty to horses in his madness is one of its most significant traits. Orlando sane would not have wounded a horse with intention to save his own life. Fairness is the very soul of chivalry; and the very meaning of chivalry is the honour of the horseman. The fairness of chivalry is based on fairness to horses as much as to men. The great horses of the romances: Rabican, Baiardo, Brigliadoro, Frontino and the rest are as famous as the paladins.

The genius of Ariosto is like that of Shakespeare in giving reality to airy nothings. He cared no more than Shakespeare himself for accuracy in geography or history,[1] and yet his places and people seem real, just as the wood near Athens, and Duke Theseus and the rude mechanicals seem real.

In the same way Ariosto may be compared with Shakespeare in the use of the supernatural. Scott himself could not handle the supernatural with effect, and his power over magic never got beyond the glorified art of the chemist or physician. In the use of "machines" and in bringing the gods out of the machines Ariosto was a master craftsman.[2] In the

[1] *E.g.* he puts Belgrade on the wrong side of the river, and his English heraldry is largely of his own creation.

[2] See note by Panizzi to *Orl. Fur.* Canto XIV. st. 78. He quotes Dryden (from Notes to the *Georgics*, iv. 660): "The only beautiful machine which I remember in the modern poets is in Ariosto, where God commanded St. Michael to take care that Paris, then besieged by the Saracens, should be succoured by Rinaldo." The archangel is to find *Silence* and *Discord*: Silence to cover the approach of the relieving army of the Christians, Discord to throw into confusion the camp of the Saracens.

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Orlando the magical, and even the supernatural in the more narrow sense, play an essential part. To begin with, there are the more simple forms of magic such as abound in the *Arabian Nights*. There is the celebrated flying horse, one of the most fascinating horses in fiction, half-horse and half-griffin, a living animal and not a bit like a legendary aeroplane. This creature has been tamed by a magician, and the magician has the command of a good deal of magic that serves to make the beholder believe in delusions. Under the spell of the magician (Atlante) people see things and act as if they were real. But when Ariosto introduces the flying horse he is careful to explain that there is nothing magical about it; it is a cross between a mare and a griffin; it is a very rare hybrid but as natural as a mule. And such is the setting that this natural history seems quite natural. There is the famous golden lance that with a touch dismounts the strongest rider; and the use of it is not accidental but essential to the main plot. With this lance Bradamant (who does not know its powers) unhorses Rodomont, and in consequence Rodomont loses his dragon-skin armour and again in consequence is killed by Rogero. There is the ring which wards off other magic and makes its holder invisible at pleasure. And the ring is again of the essence of the plot. On occasions nothing but the ring will suffice. By the ring Rogero escapes from Alcina, and by the ring Angelica escapes from Rogero. There is the horn of Astolpho which terrifies the boldest, including the Amazons and Marfisa herself. There is the enchanted

shield which must be kept hidden with a thick silken cover because its splendour dazzles the beholder into senselessness. Incidentally the loss of this shield to the world is one of the best examples of the fairness of chivalry. Rogero, for whose protection the shield had been made, only used it in case of the utmost need: once to subdue the monsters of Alcina and once to save Angelica from the orc. It happened, however, that in fighting with four knights one of them by accident tore the silken cover with his lance, and forthwith all in sight of the splendour fell to the ground senseless. Rogero was so utterly disgusted with this unintentional breach of fairness that he cast the shield into a deep well, and though it was long sought after by many knights it was never again found. There are sorcerers and sorceresses and fairies and nymphs and devils and angels and monstrosities of divers kinds, and all these forms of the magical and the supernatural are as necessary to the story as the paynims and the paladins. So far, however, there is not much difficulty if the reader will take the magical of Ariosto as he does that of the *Arabian Nights*, and does not weary his imagination in the search for allegories. And though there is abundance of this kind of the supernatural it is used by Ariosto with great economy. But beyond the magical, and the supernatural of poetical fancy, there is in Ariosto the supernatural in the religious sense. There is beneath all the fantasy the idea of divine justice.

The main action of the *Orlando* is the conflict between Saracens and Christians for the possession of

Europe; the fate of Christendom is in the balance. The greatest of the paladins is Orlando, and he has been gifted by God with an invulnerable body and perfection in all the virtues and graces of chivalry. But he forgets his duties to his God and his king, and becomes enslaved to the love of Angélica, the fairest of her sex, but a pagan. It is for this sin that madness comes upon Orlando, and the madness of Orlando is the title of the poem. To object that the madness of Orlando cannot be reconciled with our ideas of divine justice whilst we admit Dante's inscription over hell's gate, is surely to strain at the gnat and swallow the camel. But although the supreme power is fundamental in the great contest for Christendom it is not obtruded or forced on the attention. The madness of Orlando seems simply the outcome of his despair on the loss of Angelica.

The intervention of the Deity, and of the spirits of good and evil, is more prominent in the scenes in which Discord is sent into the ranks of the Saracens, the "machine" so much admired by Dryden.[1] But the human interest is never suppressed by the overwhelming powers of the superhuman. The contrast with Milton is as marked as that with Spenser. The treatment of the religious elements by Ariosto is so frankly artistic or classical that he has been censured by some of the older commentators for blasphemy. The reader familiar with mediaeval art and religion will see at once that the charge of blasphemy is simply incongruous. It was quite in accord with the spirit

[1] See above, p. 101, *n.* 2.

of Ariosto's works, as of his life, that he should have been buried in a church, lamented, as even Hoole says, by every good man, though Hoole more than any one bewails in his notes the "indefensible blasphemies" of his author. It is curious that one of the blasphemies that so shocked Hoole is singled out by Harrington for special praise, namely, the immediate reception of the soul of Isabella into heaven in spite of the self-slaughter she had so skilfully designed. Ariosto argues that this deed of Isabella (which was to save herself from Rodomont so that she might die as she had lived for Zerbino) was so approved in heaven that any one who thereafter should bear the name of Isabella would be blessed. And the good Elizabethan records that his own mother was named Isabella and bore out the prophecy. Which of his commentators was nearer the true Ariosto needs no showing.

Some readers, perhaps, are more likely to be afraid that a poet who introduces the powers and dominions of heaven will be not blasphemous, but simply dull and sermonic. Let any one who fears to be enticed into a kind of less lofty *Paradise Regained* read, to begin with, the description of the journey of Astolpho to the moon, under the guidance of Saint John, for the recovery of the lost senses of Orlando, from which Milton has borrowed the idea of the limbo of vanities.

Are there, then, no faults to be found with the poetry of the divine Ariosto? The answer is—abundance. He carries some of his virtues to excess.

His fancy runs riot in exaggeration. The English reader who has been dulled by the easy realism of modern fiction, will be breathless at the calls made on his imagination by the prowess of the heroes and the gorgeousness of the palaces and festivals. It may be said that romance without extravagance (according to our ordinary standards) is not romance, and that the only true test is that of internal harmony, not harmony with ordinary human nature. But even according to this test the divine poet sometimes errs in excess or fails in economy. The palace in the Earthly Paradise visited by Astolpho is made out of one precious stone that glows like fire; the building is as superb as the red towers of the city of Dis. But the internal harmony becomes more discordant than ultra-modern music when we are asked to imagine that the palace is thirty miles in extent; though it is true that in the vision of Coleridge, Kubla Khan decreed that for his stately pleasure dome twice five miles of fertile ground should be girdled with walls and towers. The extravagant power of Rodomont is so extended that he has given his name in all languages to the extremes of boastful daring and impossible feats of arms. It is true that just as Quixotism gives a very false idea of the *Don Quixote* of Cervantes, so does "rodomontade" suggest a very false idea of the Rodomont of Ariosto. But the great scene in which Rodomont rages through Paris, drunk with blood and fire, has its discords that seem hideous noises to the lover of simple harmonies. We all know that the gentle Shelley

could not read Ariosto, because he found the slaughter of the Saracens so unreasonable and appalling. And even if it be replied that a knight in armour in the midst of a horde of Pagans is like a Spaniard in Peru or a Dreadnought in a fleet of herring-boats, or that the slaughter of the Saracens by the poet has been surpassed by the actual battles of history, very often the excessive bloodshed seems beyond the limit not only of humanity but of credibility. Even in lines and phrases and images we are often startled by the exaggeration. Tears flow in rivers, and lovers sigh like volcanoes, and hearts of stone are melted. In brief, the extravagances of Ariosto form one of the great obstacles to any literal translation. His first readers were already steeped in romance, and the expectation of the super-heroic had become second nature. But the modern reader has been trained in romance of a different order, quite as impossible and inharmonious on analysis, but in a different way.

The faults of Ariosto are best seen in some of the minor poems,[1] but it should be remembered that they were not published in his lifetime, and were not subjected to his final revision. In the *Furioso* the reader is carried away by the realism of the narrative and the realism of the emotion. In the minor poems the exaggeration, both of incident and language, is not relieved by the rare atmosphere of the *Furioso*. The *Cinque Canti*,

[1] The references are to the *Rime di Lodovico Ariosto*. Florence, Molini, 1822.

the *Five Cantos*, which are supposed to have been intended by Ariosto to form the beginning of a second part to the *Furioso*, are altogether inferior in interest to any five cantos that might be taken at random in the longer poem. The characters seem artificial; the narrative does not run; the style is often pure rhetoric. The consequence is that the exaggeration seems altogether unreal. An excellent example of the difference is furnished by the whale which was used by Alcina for the capture of her lovers. In the *Furioso* the monster is mistaken for an island (as in the *Arabian Nights*), and when Astolpho has landed on it with Alcina it sails away to her enchanted kingdom. The story as told is not only real but exciting. But in the *Five Cantos* the whale of Alcina is so unreal that it fails to arouse even the curiosity of the reader. The exaggeration seems simply silly. In this case the interior of the monster is fitted out with all the comforts of a modern steamer. Astolpho and Rogero and the other lovers whom Alcina wished to punish are swallowed by the whale, and they are supposed to live in its inside until they die of old age. The hotel comforts are provided by the wrecks of suitable ships, which are also swallowed by the monster. Again in these cantos the evil spirit which Alcina puts at the service of Gano is a very poor piece of pantomime, with none of the ingenuity of a Belphegor or even of a great wizard. He is made to forge letters and to delude all the chief paladins by similar easy wiles. Here, though the exaggeration is really far less than

that which abounds in the *Furioso*, it never rises to reality.

Yet there are in these cantos parts which, taken in themselves, are equal in fancy and in presentation to the best of the *Furioso*. There is, for example, the story of *Suspicion and the Tyrant*,[1] which brings out most effectively the irony as well as the fancy of Ariosto. The story also has a moral, one of the simple, strong, everlasting morals that appeal to people of all times and countries, namely, that a tyrant is always afraid; all the other people in his dominion are afraid only of one man, but he is afraid of everybody. This particular tyrant built for himself a castle, and he slept in a room at the top to which there was no access except by a ladder in charge of his wife. Yet he did not trust his wife, but set others to watch her. In spite of being watched the lady killed the tyrant with his own sword. When the tyrant descended to hell he was put with the other tyrants in the boiling river, which Dante has made so familiar to all men. To the surprise of the chief judge in hell this tyrant made no complaint and uttered no cry, never said *i' mi cuoco* like the rest of his companions, and indeed seemed quite cheerful. The chief judge consulted with his brethren. They all said it would never do to have a cheerful spirit in hell— that such would be against all the inner meaning of divine justice. Therefore they put the tyrant into worse torments —so bad that they are not even named. The tyrant

[1] Canto II. st. 7 *sq.*

still seemed quite cheerful, and apparently impervious to pain. In the last resort the chief judge asked the tyrant why he was so cheerful and so impervious. The tyrant replied, "When I was above I was always in such fear of death that I never had one moment's peace. After such a life hell itself is a relief; at least I know the worst, and I am no longer afraid." After another consultation the judges sent him back again to the world: made immortal but always in dread of death; with his old suspicions intensified to such a degree that the tyrant was transformed into Suspicion itself, just as in Dante the man is transformed into the serpent.

This creation of Suspicion shows Ariosto at his best, but when Suspicion is called upon to take part in the story so as to aid the treachery of Gano the vitality disappears; altogether unlike Discord and Silence in the *Furioso*, Suspicion becomes a mere abstraction.

The *Five Cantos* also show by contrast the mighty power in the *Furioso* of the irony of Ariosto. In the *Five Cantos* the irony has vanished, and its place is taken by literary artifices and similes in the style of Tasso. Even in the interior of the whale the captured lovers of Alcina talk theology and religion as solemnly as Puritans in a meeting-house, though with none of their enthusiasm; they are simply dull.

In two other points the minor poems throw light on the wonderful vitality of the *Furioso*. First, in some passages we have the sketches which were afterwards remodelled, and so to speak welded

into the *Furioso*. There is, for example, the famous lament of Bradamant[1] on the loss of Rogero which in the *Capitoli*[2] is essentially the same but in a different dress (the *terza rima* instead of the *ottava*). Other passages also in these poems show the way in which Ariosto worked up his material, and the care he took in the construction of the *Furioso*, which seems at first reading the most careless poem ever written.

The second point that is made more clear by the minor poems is the influence of Petrarca. When Ariosto wrote the influence of Petrarca was still the dominant influence in literary Italian. The Sonnets of Ariosto are for the most part imitations, and it must be said very feeble imitations, of the great master of sonnets. His influence is also apparent in most of the other shorter poems, except the *Satires*. But again the contrast with the *Furioso* is very marked. In the *Furioso* there are many expressions and sometimes whole stanzas written with the full swing of Petrarchese exaggeration. The most notable case is the oncoming of the madness of Orlando (Canto XXIII. st. 126-129). Here the exaggeration is so marked that many critics have sought to explain it as another example of Ariosto's irony, and have actually supposed that in the central tragic incident of the whole work Ariosto is chiefly concerned to make a parody of Petrarca. But taken in its setting this poetical exaggeration put in the mouth of Orlando gives a vivid idea of the approach

[1] *Orl. Fur.* Canto XLIV. st. 61 *sq.* [2] Capitolo IX. *op. cit.* p. 282.

of madness, for Orlando had always been celebrated for his wisdom and prudence as compared with the other paladins. Indeed, the main idea of the poem as seen in the beginning is to show how the wise Orlando becomes mad with love.[1] To make the reasonable Orlando talk to himself in the most exalted manner of Petrarca is far more effective and more in harmony with the whole long narrative than if the madness had been made to come with a sudden shock. Following on this outburst of poetry Orlando wanders all night through the forest. His melancholy is turned to fury when he finds the grotto where Medoro and Angelica had intertwined their names; and then again lapsing into melancholy he falls on the earth, and for three days and nights stares with open eyes up at the sky. Instead of saying that Ariosto in such a scene wished to show his irony, we ought rather to admit that he chose the very best style available for his purpose.

With regard to the Petrarchese phrases that constantly recur in depicting the exaggeration of the passions they had for the most part become proverbial, and even in English we speak of floods of tears and hearts of stone without thinking of the absurdity of the literal exaggeration.

But when we take the minor poems in isolation for the most part the unreality of the exaggeration

[1] Cf. Canto I. st. 2:

Dirò d' Orlando in un medesmo tratto
Cosa non detta in prosa mai, nè in rima;
he per amor venne in furore e matto,
' un uom che si saggio era stimato prima.

destroys the sentiment; and until he came under the influence of Alessandra the vein of Ariosto was not the vein of Petrarca but the vein of Ovid. The difference between the literary imitator and the real lover is shown in the poems written plainly under the influence of his great passion, as for example the canzone describing the first meeting in Florence and the lines describing the journey to the wilds of the Garfagnana.[1] Even in the case of Petrarca himself particular sonnets cannot be appreciated unless taken as parts of a long series, and the beauties of the *Furioso* also need their original setting for the full effect.

On the whole, the study of the minor poems serves to show how well in the *Furioso* Ariosto had succeeded in the rare combination of imitative and creative power.

The real man is revealed in the *Satires*, and surely the name was never applied to productions so genial and unselfish. And this reminds me, that though at this part I meant to indicate the abundance of the faults of Ariosto, I have again, through the love of the man and his work, been drawn into eulogy.

Ariosto has been called by Mr. Gardner the king of Court poets, but the present-day Englishman who thinks of a Court poet as a poet-laureate, and perhaps also thinks that his office should be abolished, is not attracted by the title. And yet to be in truth the king of Court poets is to be the king of a very ancient and noble race of bards. There were Court

[1] See above, p. 66.

poets amongst the ancient Teutons, and still earlier amongst the ancient Gauls. "Encomiastic verse of a highly rhetorical character bulks very largely in the poetic literature of Wales. . . . Of all the lands in the west of Europe the panegyric was most extensively practised in Ireland . . . and in Ireland the Court poetry [in the vernacular] continues down to the first half of the seventeenth century." [1]

Court poetry was part of the tradition of mediaeval romance, and even in the time of Ariosto himself the Court poets recited their panegyrics.[2] And Ariosto might also plead in excuse for his encomiastic verses the example of his Latins. But when all is said most of the Court poetry in the *Orlando* is excessive in quantity and inferior in quality; some of it, to the modern reader who is familiar with the history of the House of Este, and in particular with the life of Cardinal Ippolito, is repellent. Harrington wisely omitted most of it from his translation, though he was himself a Court poet, and dedicated his book to Queen Elizabeth, his godmother. Even in Ariosto's own times his Court poetry was held to be exaggerated, though no doubt for the moment his reference to living people of importance added to the realism of the romance. The long lists of historical personages with their living representatives can be of little interest to the modern reader unless he has made a special and minute study of contemporary history, such as

[1] *Prolegomena to the Study of the later Irish Bards* (1200–1500), by E. C. Quiggin. Published by the British Academy.

[2] In *La Spagna*, one of the oldest, the forms of recitation are strongly marked; in Tasso they disappear.

is offered in the exhaustive works of Mr. Gardner. But Cardinal Ippolito and his ancestry are so much in evidence that they cannot be passed over altogether. Rogero the hero, who, next to Orlando, and in some ways more than Orlando, is the principal personage, is introduced as the ancestor of this Ippolito, and the culmination of the story is his marriage with Bradamant, with this far-off event—the birth of Ippolito—as the final cause. It would be pleasing to think that Ariosto was indulging in irony and satire in his fulsome eulogies of the Cardinal, but this simple solution does not accord with the life or the times of the king of Court poets.[1]

A fault commonly attributed to Ariosto is plagiarism, and in particular he is accused of taking wholesale from Boiardo without even mentioning his name. One modern critic has even supposed that Ariosto deliberately designed to dethrone Boiardo and take his place in popular esteem. Such insidious baseness is not only utterly opposed to the character of Ariosto, but he stated publicly when he began his work that he intended to continue the work of Boiardo, and to take up Boiardo's main plot and his subsidiary stories where he had left them. Though the name of Boiardo is not mentioned in the *Orlando* it is constantly taken for granted that the reader is familiar with the older poem.[2] But apart from this particular evidence, the accusation of plagiarism

[1] Canto III. st. 50 may probably be so interpreted. Tortoli, p. xlii, *n.*

[2] See above, p. 4.

shows a want of appreciation of the literary morality or custom of the times. Most of the characters in Boiardo are taken from the general store of romantic legend with which the people of the age were familiar, and which indeed had become a part of popular tradition. Orlando or Roland (to give the more familiar name in English) was as well known and as real a personage as Charlemagne himself, or we might say that Charlemagne was as legendary as Roland; and this legendary history was familiar to all the men and women of the time from their youth up. The art of the poet lay more in the setting of the old than in the invention of new characters. The originality of Boiardo, as he himself states, lay in his making Orlando madly in love; the originality of Ariosto lay in turning the love of Orlando into real madness. Boiardo also no doubt invented new characters and new names; he was said to have taken some of his names from places in his own lordship. Ariosto took over from Boiardo the new as well as the old names and characters, but he also made his own discoveries (or inventions) in the possibilities of their qualities in action. Angelica, Marfisa, Astolpho, Flordelis, and even Rodomont are very different in the two poets; and yet they might be the same real people under different circumstances. But in truth in the age of Ariosto, and for long after, plagiarism, as we esteem it, was not a vice but a virtue. Spenser in the *Faery Queen* introduced literal translations of stanzas from Ariosto, just as Ariosto had incorporated famous passages

from his Latins. In the same way there are in the *Orlando* imitations or suggestions from Dante and other Italian writers. Both Boiardo and Ariosto were poets in the front rank, but it is very doubtful if their originality would have been greater, or their poetry would have attained such quality, if they had attempted from the first to achieve the strained originality of the present-day romanticist. And, after all, the greatest of modern romanticists, Scott and Dumas, have used historical foundations and historical characters. Shakespeare himself for the most part took his personages and his plots from real or legendary history.

The originality of really great writers is best tested by their appreciation by different ages for different reasons. Successive ages as they pass point to what they call the modernity of the great writers. The reader of this age also will find a good deal of the modern in Ariosto. There are in the *Orlando* ideas which just now are exciting a very lively interest. The poet has created in Bradamant the ideal of the woman militant, and Bradamant is the central heroine of the whole poem. In battle or in single combat she is the equal of the greatest knights, and yet she never loses her woman's character. Her love for Rogero is love at first sight, and becomes the ruling passion in all her thoughts and deeds. She is by turns fearful and jealous, self-effacing and wholly exacting, forgiving and unforgiving, variable as the wind and yet constant as the fixed star, just as if she had never donned armour or panted like a leopard

to spring on the enemy in battle. Even Marfisa, who in some ways is the counterpart of Rodomont, is never brutally masculine; she shows her saving graces on occasions with delightful unexpectedness, as when she forbears to hang Brunello. The Amazons themselves are quite reasonable even in their savage laws against men—granted the provocation. The devotion of Ariosto to women, and the honour he paid to woman in his invocations,[1] are plainly genuine and sincere, and in marked contrast to the flattery bestowed on his contemptible patron. And although the woman militant plays a great part in Ariosto perhaps his greatest triumph is Angelica, who never even wore a dagger. Another modern point in Ariosto is his dealing with the supernatural, for there is now a reaction against the narrow materialism of nineteenth-century science. The new psychology is favourable to the supernatural, or at least to the possibilities of supercerebral consciousness. Men and women may now say they believe in pantheism, or even in magic without being set down as feeble-minded or imperfectly educated. With the extension of the possibilities of ignorance we have enlarged the possibilities of knowledge. The supernatural of Ariosto is of the modern type, or rather of the modern types.

It would perhaps be more just to say that the moderns are reverting to Renaissance modes of belief in the supernatural, as the Renaissance people reverted to classical paganism and Platonic

[1] Cantos XX., XXXVII.

philosophy.[1] Our most fashionable philosopher, M. Bergson, finds it convenient to begin his modernism with the Neo-Platonist Plotinus, who taught in Alexandria and in Rome sixteen centuries ago. Ordinary mortals have not gone back quite so far, but they have gone or are going back to the Renaissance. Now as then credulity driven out in one form comes back to life stronger than ever. Machiavelli firmly believed that the air was full of spirits, who took pity on mortals and warned them by sinister auguries of impending calamities. Guicciardini, a forerunner of psychical research, also believed in aerial spirits, who communicated with mortals, for the very excellent reason that he himself had an experience which he considered most certain proof. Both of these men were contemporaries of Ariosto, and like him men of genius and also men of affairs. But although Ariosto takes for granted in the *Furioso* the supernatural and the possibilities of magic he was quite aware of the abuses to which such beliefs are subject. In one of his comedies (*Il Negromante*) the principal aim is to expose and satirise the necromancy of his own day. From this point of view he is as sane as a London police magistrate. He scourges the corruption of the papal court and the abuses of the Church, but in one of his finest outbursts he shows that he was a crusader in spirit, as he was a descendant of crusaders in race.[2] Four centuries

[1] Cf. Villari, *La storia di G. Savonarola*, lib. i. c. 4, "On Ficino and the Platonic Academy in Florence."

[2] See above, p. 6.

ago he called on the great powers of the day to leave their internecine quarrels and to drive the Turk from Europe.

Finally, in these days there is a reaction against realism of all kinds in favour of romance; and the father of modern romance is Ariosto. The ordinary reader of romance may be repelled at once when he is told that Ariosto was a poet; he may be willing to read a novel a day all the year round, but since he left school perhaps he has never read any verse except, if he happens to be a church-goer, in a hymn-book. His brain reels at the idea of amusing himself by reading any poet, let alone an Italian poet. The extraordinary modern reader no doubt still reads poetry, but he takes his poetry sadly; if he reads an Italian poet it will be Dante, and he will read him with the same kind of feeling with which he reads the book of Job, the delight in the poetry being darkened with the awe of the divine justice.

Ariosto was certainly a poet, and his greatest work is one of the longest poems ever written. But the ordinary reader may be assured that in plot and in by-plot, in diversity of character and of incident, above all, in the sudden introduction of the altogether unexpected, Ariosto is not surpassed by any writer of prose romance. The romances of chivalry had a curious history; they began as ballads sung for the most part by gentleman beggars; they were turned into prose and expanded and strung together in lengthy narratives which formed the sole reading (or hearing) of the mediaeval nobility and clergy. Then,

again, there was a reversion to poetry, and the greatest of the romances of chivalry are the romances by Boiardo and Ariosto. Both might have written in prose without detriment to the stories they had to tell. In fact, very soon after its first appearance the *Furioso* was translated into French prose,[1] and found a wide and grateful public. The ordinary modern reader must not be deceived by the limitations of the modern ideas of poetry and poets. In the mediaeval period every kind of learning, as well as of amusement, was served up in verses. History, geography, theology, philosophy, astronomy were all done into verse. Even treatises on agriculture and on trade policy were in form poems.[2] The mediaeval encyclopaedia was itself a poem.[3] In the course of time the poetical form was abandoned in the case of the more technical sciences, but even in the eighteenth century there were survivals of the scientific uses of poetry.[4] In philosophy and theology the usage of poetical presentation still survives.

It was, however, specially in works of fiction and of imagination that the poetical form endured the longest and showed the greatest vigour. In diversity

[1] The title of the French version reads as follows: Roland Furieux, composé premierement en ryme Tuscane par messire Loys Arioste, noble Ferraroys, & maintenant traduict en prose Françoyse: partie suyuant la phrase de l'Autheur, partie aussi le stile de ceste nostre langue. The letters patent granting the privilege of publication for six years are dated March 17, 1543. It was printed at Lyons.

[2] *Five Hundred Points of Husbandry*, by Thomas Tusser, is a poem with a very practical object in view; so also is the *Libelle of English Polycye* (reproduced in the Political Songs of the Rolls Series). This poem gives all the points of the mediaeval tariff reformers, and surprisingly modern they are done into prose.

[3] *The Image of the World*. See above, p. 52, *n.* 1.

[4] The *Botanic Garden*, a poem by Erasmus Darwin, was published in 1781.

of subject-matter, as already observed, Ariosto may be compared with Shakespeare, and the poetical plays of Shakespeare are still as popular as his prose comedies. Ariosto was from his youth up a writer of comedies, and of some of the comedies, written in his youth in prose, he made poetical versions in mid-life. He might equally well have turned some of his stories in the *Orlando* into prose. The "Ariosto of the North" began writing his romances in poetry. The people who devoured *Marmion* and the *Lady of the Lake* did not think they were reading poetry, and still less did they know that the Scot had derived his method and his inspiration largely from the Italian.

The judgment expressed in this brief survey of the genius of Ariosto may be supplemented by retelling the story of Byron's naming Scott the Ariosto of the North, in his *Childe Harold*:

> . . . first rose
> The Tuscan father's comedy divine;
> Then not unequal to the Florentine,
> The southern Scott, the minstrel who called forth
> A new creation with his magic line,
> And, like the Ariosto of the North,
> Sang ladye-love and war, romance and knightly worth.
>
> *Childe Harold's Pilgrimage*, Canto IV. st. 40.

In writing to Murray[1] about this stanza Byron said: "I do not know whether Scott will like it but I have called him the Ariosto of the North in my text. *If he should not say so in time.*" Apparently Murray made some objection, and Byron replied:

[1] Moore, *Letters of Lord Byron*, vol. iv. pp. 51, 65.

"With regard to the Ariosto of the North surely their themes, chivalry, war, and love were as like as can be; and as to the compliment, if you knew what the Italians think of Ariosto you would not hesitate about that. If you think Scott will dislike it say so and I will expunge. I do not call him the *Scotch* Ariosto, which would be sad *provincial* eulogy, but the Ariosto of the North, meaning all countries that are not South." Byron apparently did not know that Scott learned Italian, as a boy, to read Ariosto. The following extract from Scott's Diary also serves to show that he would appreciate the compliment. "I have a long letter from Baron von Goethe, which I must have read to me; for though I know German I have forgotten their written hand. I make it a rule seldom to read and never to answer foreign letters from literary folk. . . . But Goethe is different and a wonderful fellow—the Ariosto and almost the Voltaire of Germany." [1]

Goethe's own appreciation of Ariosto is shown in the scene in *Torquato Tasso* [2] in which are placed busts of Virgil and Ariosto. Virgil has been crowned with a laurel wreath, and on the brow of Ariosto has been placed a wreath of varied flowers.

Antonio. But tell me, who on Ariosto's brow
Hath placed this wreath?
Leonora. This hand.
Antonio. It hath done well.
It more becomes him than a laurel crown.
As o'er her fruitful bosom Nature throws

[1] Lockhart, *Life of Scott*, vol. v. p. 100.
[2] *Torquato Tasso*, Act I. Sc. iv. Anna Swanwick's translation.

Her variegated robe of beauteous green,
So he enshrouds in Fable's flowery garb,
Whatever can conspire to render man
Worthy of love and honour. Power and taste,
Experience, understanding, and content,
And a pure feeling for the good and true,
Pervade the spirit of his every song,
. . . . . .
Half-hid in verdure, Folly slily lurks;
At times, resounding from a golden cloud,
The voice of Wisdom utters lofty truth,
While Madness, from a wild harmonious lute
Scatters forth bursts of fitful harmony,
Yet all the while the justest measure holds.
He who aspires to emulate this man
E'en for his boldness well deserves a crown.

There can be little doubt that the immense popularity of Ariosto throughout Europe was in the main due to his merit as a story-teller and as a painter of character and of scenes in which the actors moved. There are, however, magnificent passages in the original which would conform to the most narrow or most exalted definition of poetry, and, above all, there is throughout the atmosphere that only the great poets[1] can create. And the atmosphere that is breathed by any who will take the

[1] The reader of modern Italian poetry may be reminded of Carducci's lines written at Scandiano, the birthplace of Boiardo:

. . . a tergo mi lasciai la grama
Che il mondo dice poesia, lasciai
I deliri a cui par che dietro agogni
L' età malata. Io sento che mi chiama
De' secoli la voce, e risognai
La verità dei grandi antichi sogni.

Rime e ritmi, p. 263.

trouble to voyage through the world of Ariosto is pure delight after the atmosphere of the modern problem moralities.

Pro bono malum is the motto appended by Ariosto to the good work on which he had spent the best years of his life and the concentration of a rare genius. He knew that he had done well, and he knew the evil he had received from his patron Ippolito in return. After more than three centuries of approval in the great world it would be strange if with a new century a wider interpretation has to be given to Ariosto's motto, and the good he has done is to be requited by the evil of neglect.

THE END

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